US009369704B2

(12) **United States Patent**
Sato

(10) **Patent No.: US 9,369,704 B2**
(45) **Date of Patent: Jun. 14, 2016**

(54) **IMAGE PROCESSING APPARATUS AND METHOD**

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(73) Assignee: **SONY CORPORATION**, Tokyo (JP)

(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

(21) Appl. No.: **14/329,182**

(22) Filed: **Jul. 11, 2014**

(65) **Prior Publication Data**

US 2014/0321536 A1 Oct. 30, 2014

Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation of application No. 13/700,156, filed as application No. PCT/JP2011/062797 on Jun. 3, 2011, now Pat. No. 8,849,052.

(30) **Foreign Application Priority Data**

Jun. 4, 2010	(JP)	2010-129414
Sep. 30, 2010	(JP)	2010-222300
Mar. 10, 2011	(JP)	2011-053479
Mar. 11, 2011	(JP)	2011-054816

(51) **Int. Cl.**
G06K 9/00 (2006.01)
H04N 19/18 (2014.01)
(Continued)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC ***H04N 19/00296*** (2013.01); ***H04N 19/119*** (2014.11); ***H04N 19/124*** (2014.11); ***H04N 19/126*** (2014.11); ***H04N 19/14*** (2014.11); ***H04N 19/174*** (2014.11); ***H04N 19/176*** (2014.11); ***H04N 19/196*** (2014.11); ***H04N 19/30*** (2014.11); ***H04N 19/33*** (2014.11); ***H04N 19/44*** (2014.11); ***H04N 19/463*** (2014.11); ***H04N 19/70*** (2014.11)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
None
See application file for complete search history.

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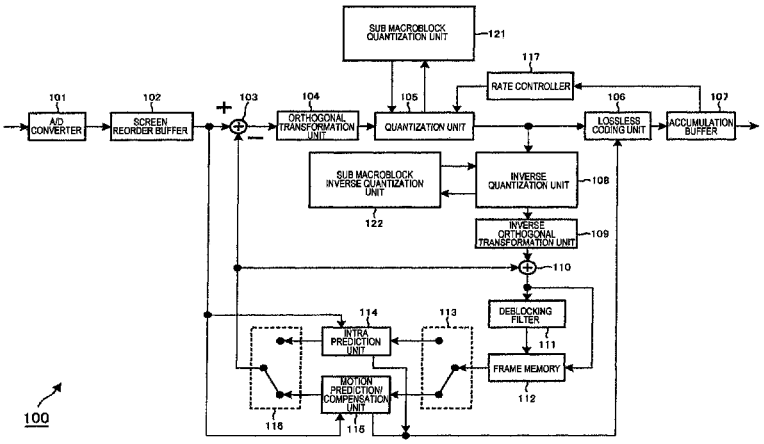
Assistant Examiner — Amandeep Saini
(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm* — Oblon, McClelland, Maier & Neustadt, L.L.P

(57) **ABSTRACT**

An image processing apparatus and a method for processing an image. The image processing apparatus includes circuitry configured to set, based on a value indicating a minimum coding block size for which a difference quantization parameter is set and based on the difference quantization parameter, a current quantization parameter for a current coding block. The current coding block is in a layer that is lower than a layer of a largest coding block. The circuitry is further configured to inversely quantize quantized data based on the set current quantization parameter.

10 Claims, 43 Drawing Sheets



(51) **Int. Cl.**

H04N 19/119	(2014.01)
H04N 19/176	(2014.01)
H04N 19/70	(2014.01)
H04N 19/30	(2014.01)
H04N 19/196	(2014.01)
H04N 19/463	(2014.01)
H04N 19/124	(2014.01)
H04N 19/126	(2014.01)
H04N 19/14	(2014.01)
H04N 19/174	(2014.01)
H04N 19/44	(2014.01)
H04N 19/33	(2014.01)

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Office Action issued Mar. 31, 2016 in Japanese Patent Application No. 2014-114195. (6 pp.).

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FIG. 1

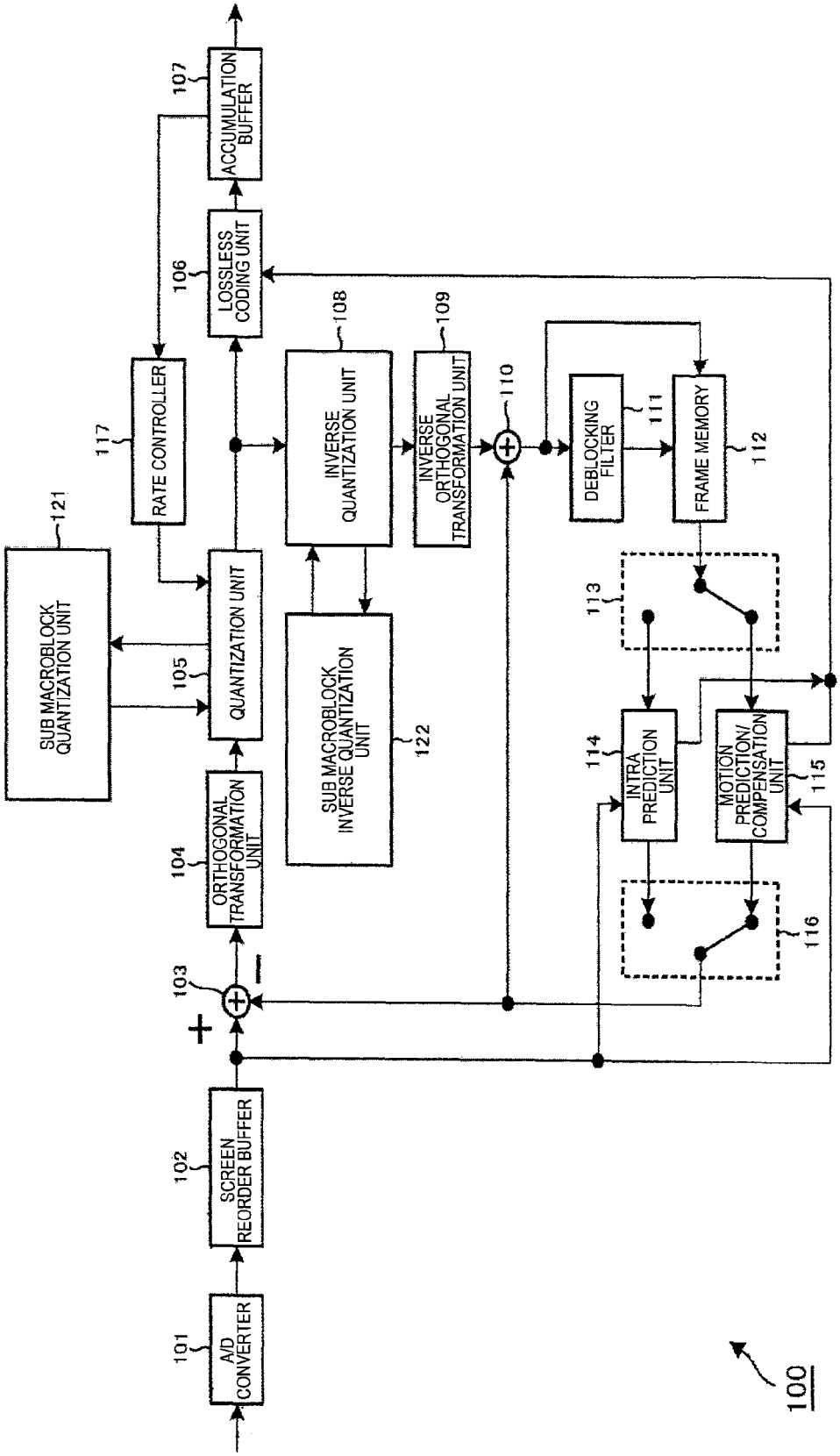

A/D CONVERTER
101
SCREEN REORDER BUFFER
102
+
−
103
ORTHOGONAL TRANSFORMATION UNIT
104
QUANTIZATION UNIT
105
LOSSLESS CODING UNIT
106
ACCUMULATION BUFFER
107
INVERSE QUANTIZATION UNIT
108
INVERSE ORTHOGONAL TRANSFORMATION UNIT
109
110
DEBLOCKING FILTER
111
FRAME MEMORY
112
113
INTRA PREDICTION UNIT
114
MOTION PREDICTION/ COMPENSATION UNIT
115
116
RATE CONTROLLER
117
SUB MACROBLOCK QUANTIZATION UNIT
121
SUB MACROBLOCK INVERSE QUANTIZATION UNIT
122
100

FIG. 2

QP_Y	<30	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51
QP_C	$=QP_Y$	29	30	31	32	32	33	34	34	35	35	36	36	37	37	37	38	38	38	39	39	39	39

FIG. 3

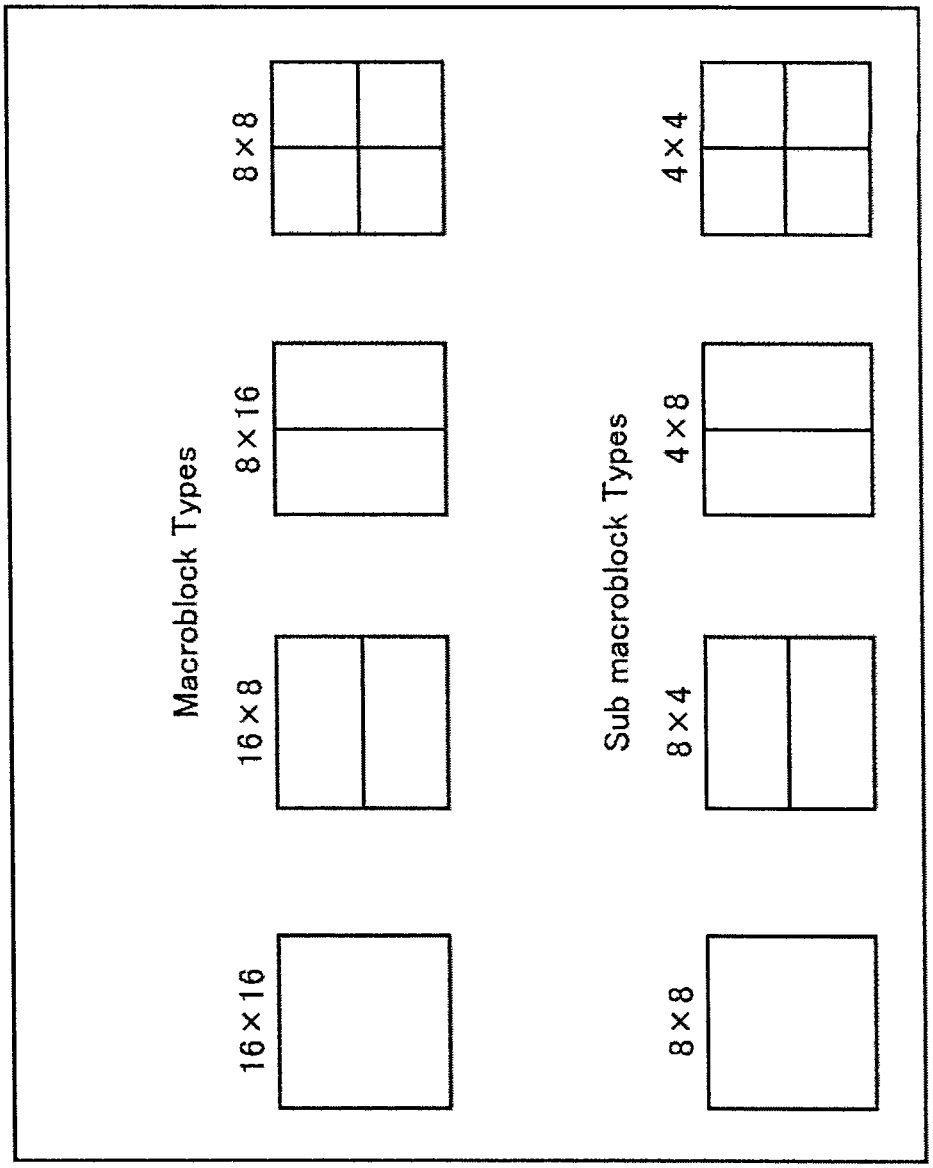

Macroblock Types
16×16
16×8
8×16
8×8
Sub macroblock Types
8×8
8×4
4×8
4×4

FIG. 4

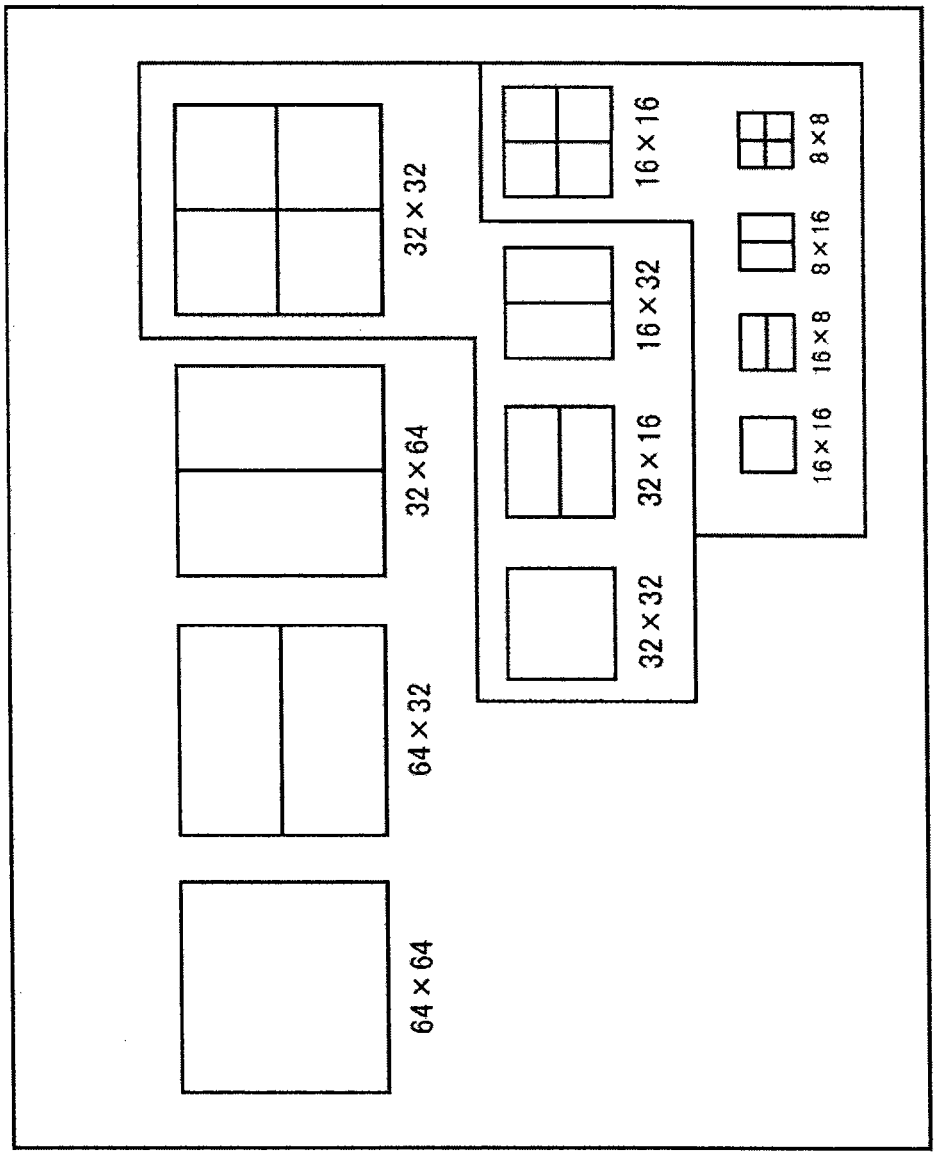


FIG. 5

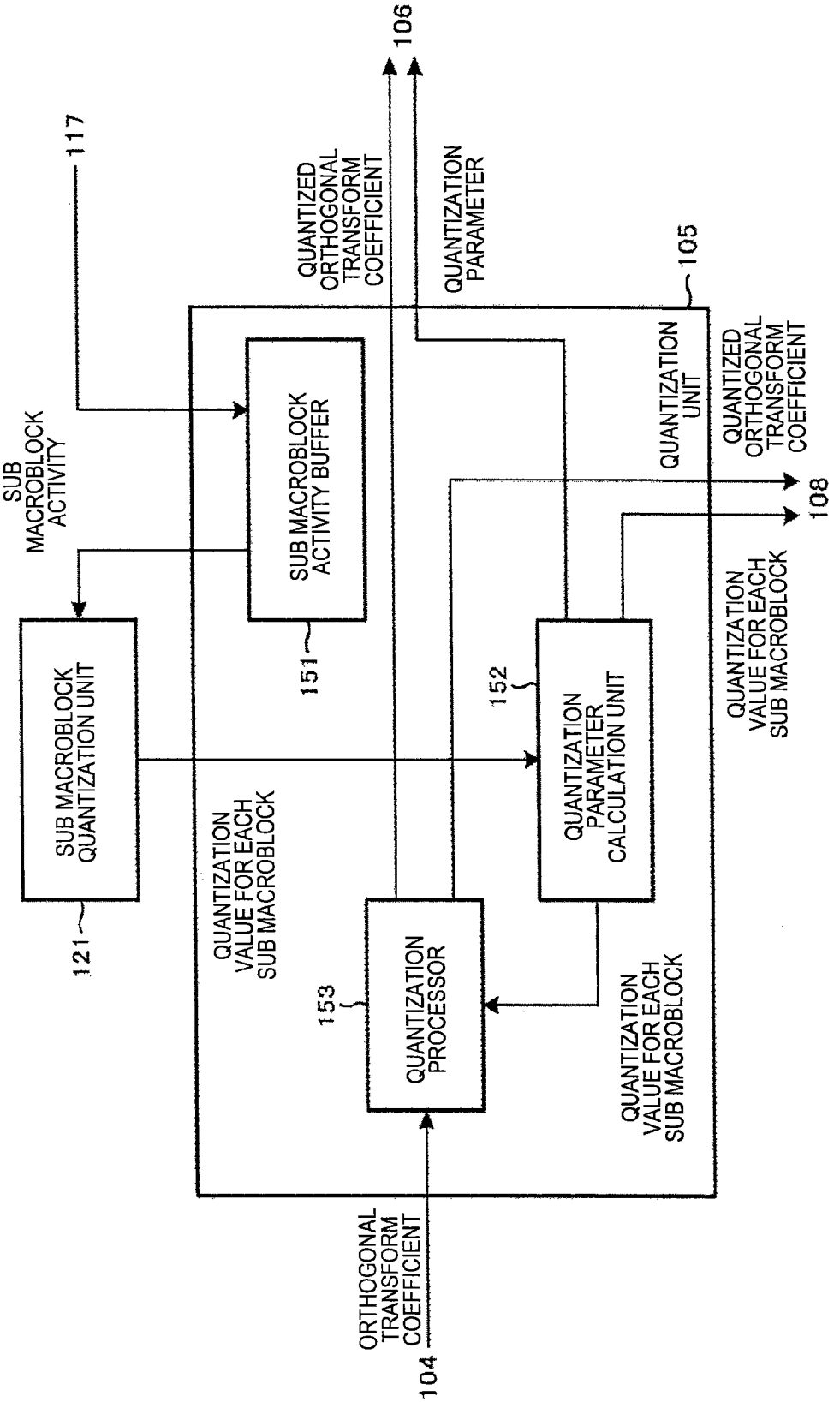

106
QUANTIZED ORTHOGONAL TRANSFORM COEFFICIENT
QUANTIZATION PARAMETER
117
105
SUB MACROBLOCK ACTIVITY
SUB MACROBLOCK ACTIVITY BUFFER
QUANTIZATION UNIT
QUANTIZED ORTHOGONAL TRANSFORM COEFFICIENT
108
151
152
SUB MACROBLOCK QUANTIZATION UNIT
QUANTIZATION PARAMETER CALCULATION UNIT
QUANTIZATION VALUE FOR EACH SUB MACROBLOCK
121
QUANTIZATION VALUE FOR EACH SUB MACROBLOCK
153
QUANTIZATION PROCESSOR
QUANTIZATION VALUE FOR EACH SUB MACROBLOCK
ORTHOGONAL TRANSFORM COEFFICIENT
104

FIG. 6

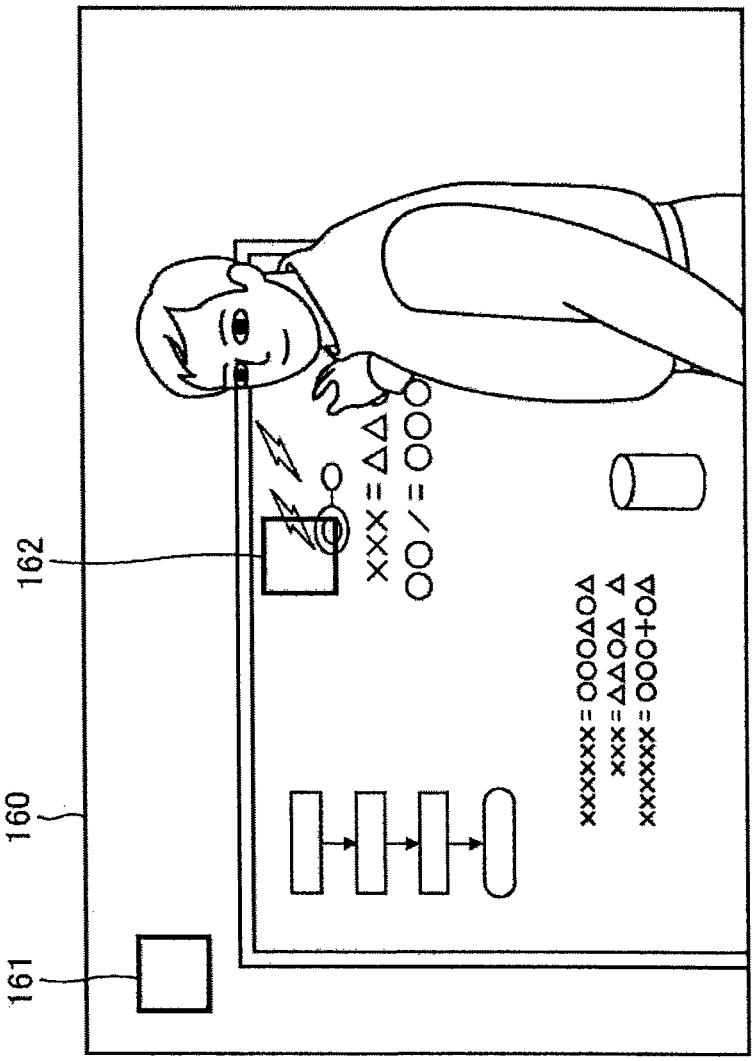


FIG. 7

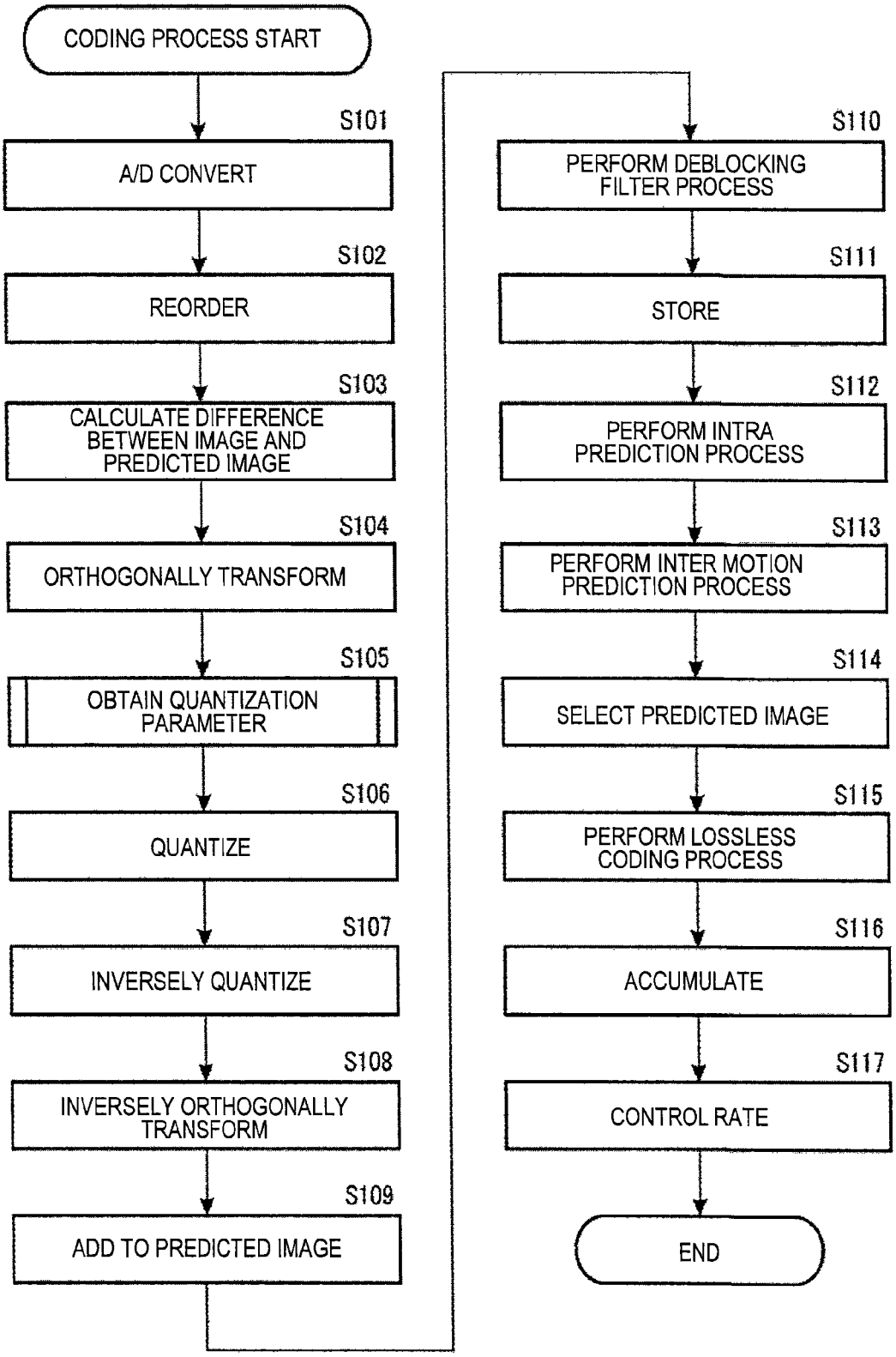

CODING PROCESS START
S101
A/D CONVERT
S102
REORDER
S103
CALCULATE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN IMAGE AND PREDICTED IMAGE
S104
ORTHOGONALLY TRANSFORM
S105
OBTAIN QUANTIZATION PARAMETER
S106
QUANTIZE
S107
INVERSELY QUANTIZE
S108
INVERSELY ORTHOGONALLY TRANSFORM
S109
ADD TO PREDICTED IMAGE
S110
PERFORM DEBLOCKING FILTER PROCESS
S111
STORE
S112
PERFORM INTRA PREDICTION PROCESS
S113
PERFORM INTER MOTION PREDICTION PROCESS
S114
SELECT PREDICTED IMAGE
S115
PERFORM LOSSLESS CODING PROCESS
S116
ACCUMULATE
S117
CONTROL RATE
END

FIG. 8

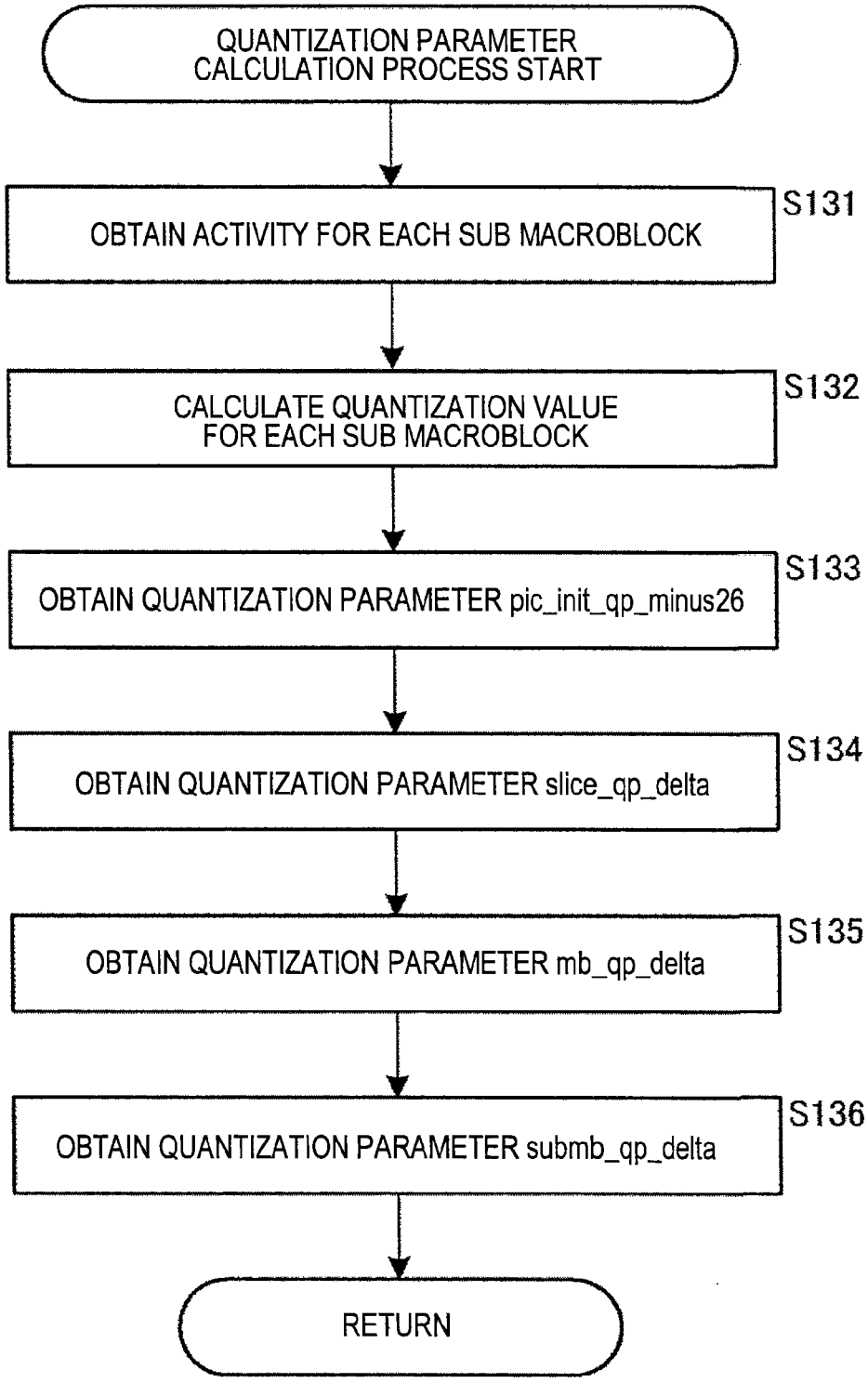

QUANTIZATION PARAMETER CALCULATION PROCESS START
OBTAIN ACTIVITY FOR EACH SUB MACROBLOCK
S131
CALCULATE QUANTIZATION VALUE FOR EACH SUB MACROBLOCK
S132
OBTAIN QUANTIZATION PARAMETER pic_init_qp_minus26
S133
OBTAIN QUANTIZATION PARAMETER slice_qp_delta
S134
OBTAIN QUANTIZATION PARAMETER mb_qp_delta
S135
OBTAIN QUANTIZATION PARAMETER submb_qp_delta
S136
RETURN

FIG. 9

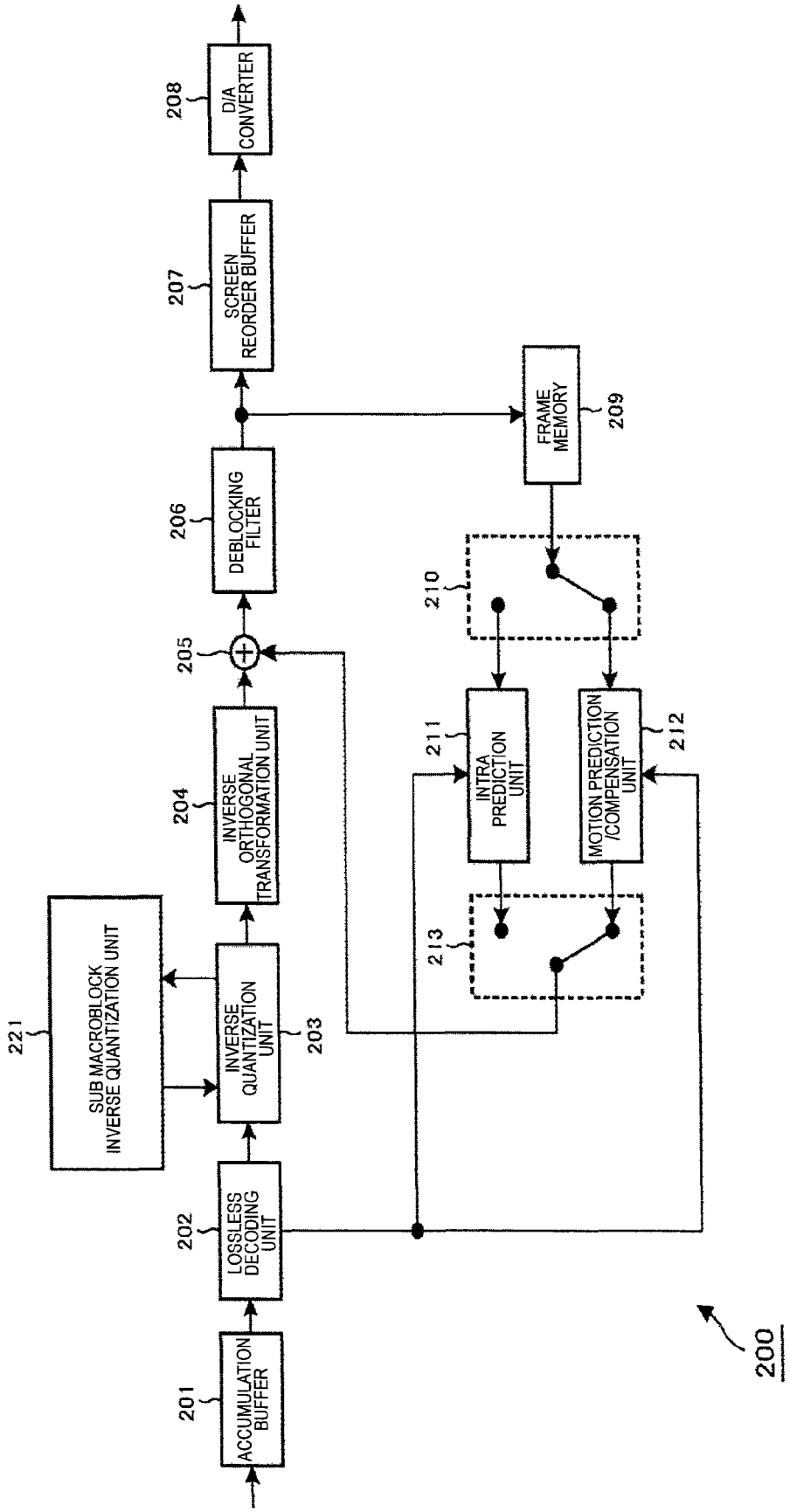

ACCUMULATION BUFFER
201
LOSSLESS DECODING UNIT
202
SUB MACROBLOCK INVERSE QUANTIZATION UNIT
221
INVERSE QUANTIZATION UNIT
203
INVERSE ORTHOGONAL TRANSFORMATION UNIT
204
205
DEBLOCKING FILTER
206
SCREEN REORDER BUFFER
207
D/A CONVERTER
208
FRAME MEMORY
209
210
INTRA PREDICTION UNIT
211
MOTION PREDICTION /COMPENSATION UNIT
212
213
200

FIG. 10

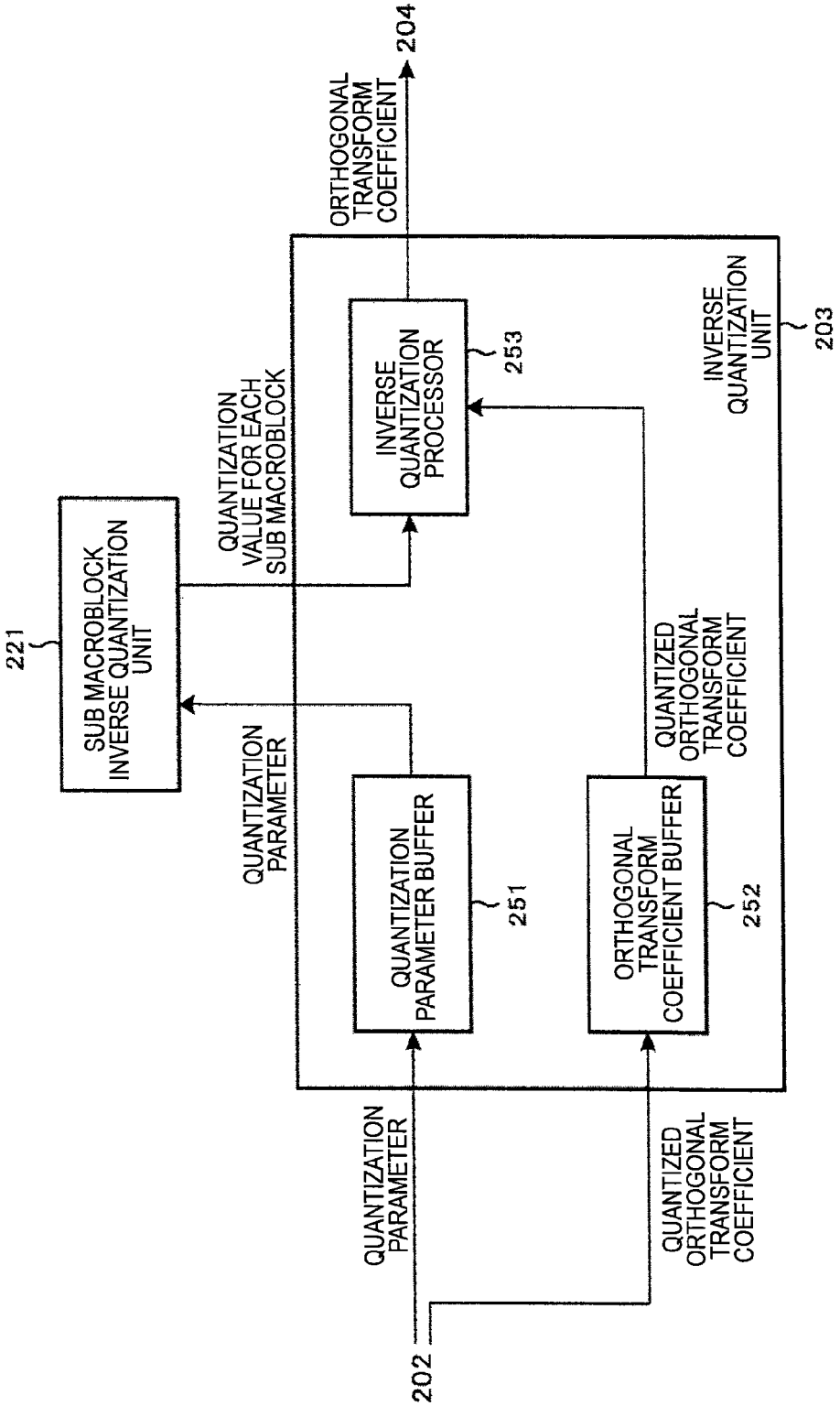

202
QUANTIZATION PARAMETER
QUANTIZED ORTHOGONAL TRANSFORM COEFFICIENT
INVERSE QUANTIZATION UNIT
203
QUANTIZATION PARAMETER BUFFER
251
ORTHOGONAL TRANSFORM COEFFICIENT BUFFER
252
INVERSE QUANTIZATION PROCESSOR
253
ORTHOGONAL TRANSFORM COEFFICIENT
204
QUANTIZATION VALUE FOR EACH SUB MACROBLOCK
QUANTIZATION PARAMETER
QUANTIZED ORTHOGONAL TRANSFORM COEFFICIENT
221
SUB MACROBLOCK INVERSE QUANTIZATION UNIT

FIG. 11

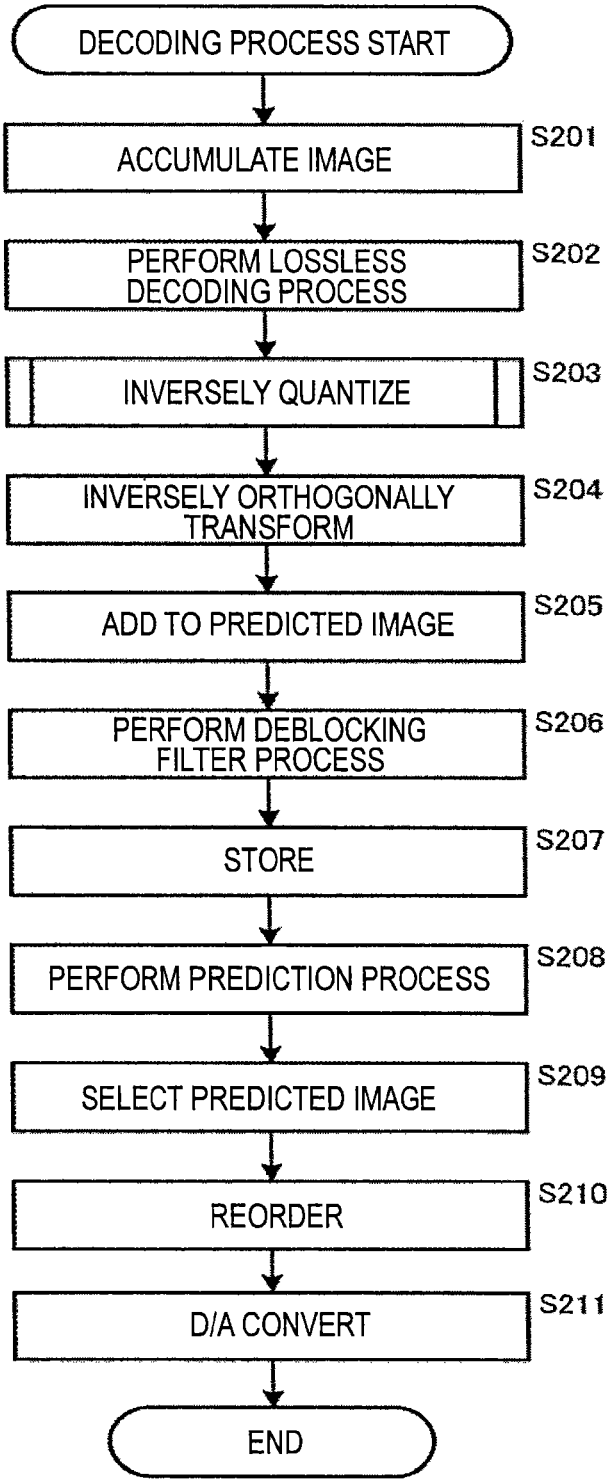

DECODING PROCESS START
ACCUMULATE IMAGE
S201
PERFORM LOSSLESS DECODING PROCESS
S202
INVERSELY QUANTIZE
S203
INVERSELY ORTHOGONALLY TRANSFORM
S204
ADD TO PREDICTED IMAGE
S205
PERFORM DEBLOCKING FILTER PROCESS
S206
STORE
S207
PERFORM PREDICTION PROCESS
S208
SELECT PREDICTED IMAGE
S209
REORDER
S210
D/A CONVERT
S211
END

FIG. 12

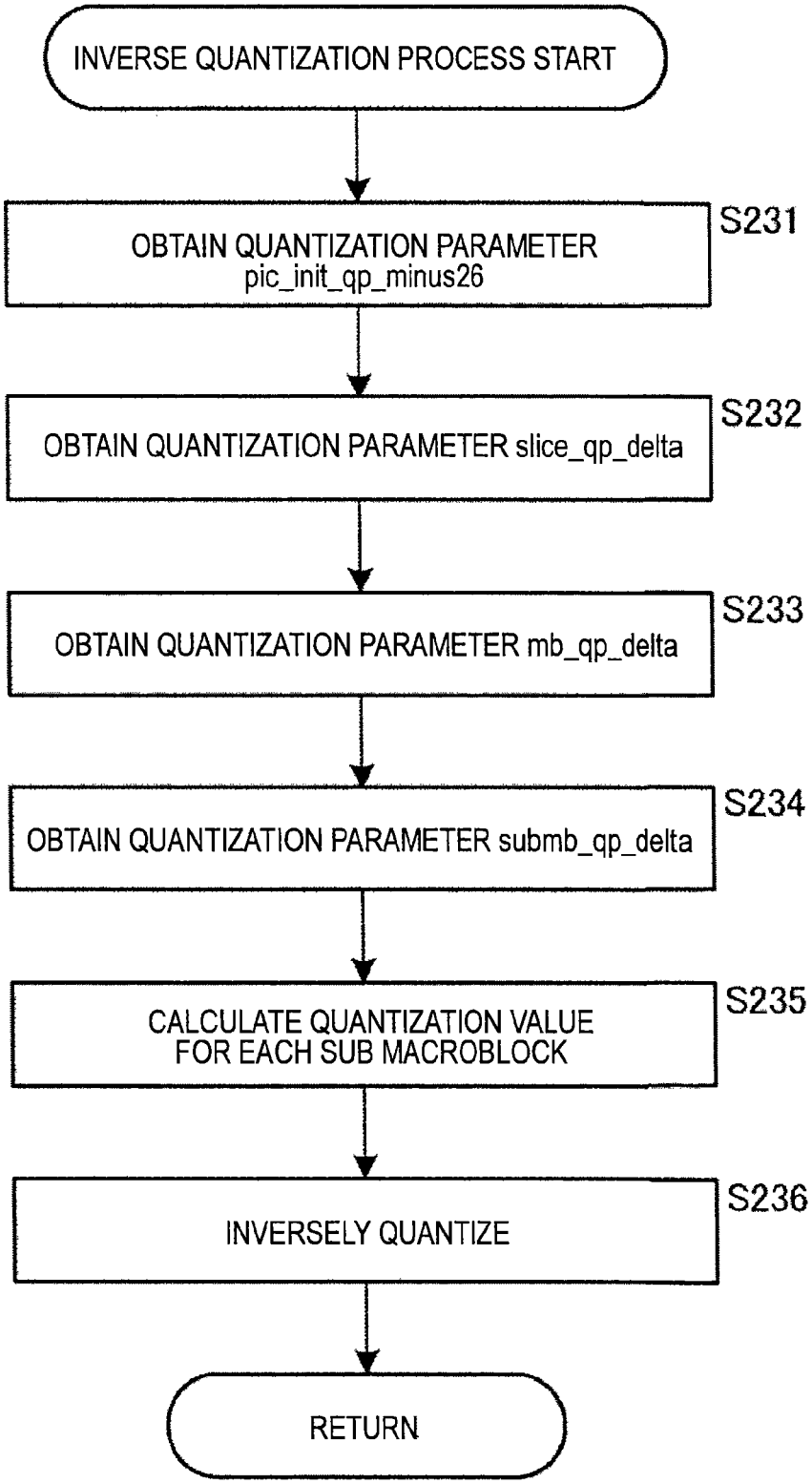

INVERSE QUANTIZATION PROCESS START
OBTAIN QUANTIZATION PARAMETER pic_init_qp_minus26
S231
OBTAIN QUANTIZATION PARAMETER slice_qp_delta
S232
OBTAIN QUANTIZATION PARAMETER mb_qp_delta
S233
OBTAIN QUANTIZATION PARAMETER submb_qp_delta
S234
CALCULATE QUANTIZATION VALUE FOR EACH SUB MACROBLOCK
S235
INVERSELY QUANTIZE
S236
RETURN

FIG. 13

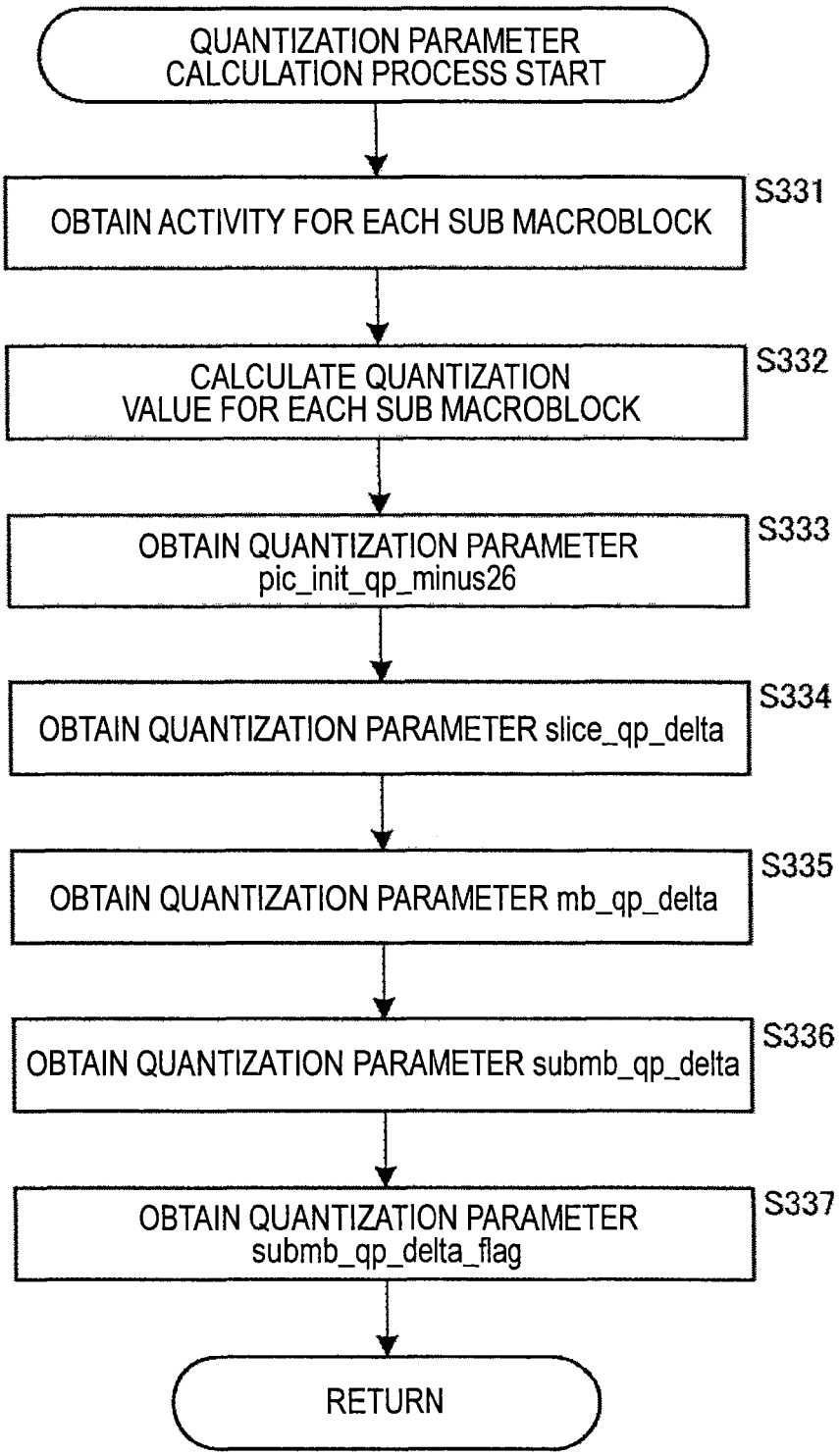

QUANTIZATION PARAMETER CALCULATION PROCESS START
OBTAIN ACTIVITY FOR EACH SUB MACROBLOCK
S331
CALCULATE QUANTIZATION VALUE FOR EACH SUB MACROBLOCK
S332
OBTAIN QUANTIZATION PARAMETER pic_init_qp_minus26
S333
OBTAIN QUANTIZATION PARAMETER slice_qp_delta
S334
OBTAIN QUANTIZATION PARAMETER mb_qp_delta
S335
OBTAIN QUANTIZATION PARAMETER submb_qp_delta
S336
OBTAIN QUANTIZATION PARAMETER submb_qp_delta_flag
S337
RETURN

FIG. 14

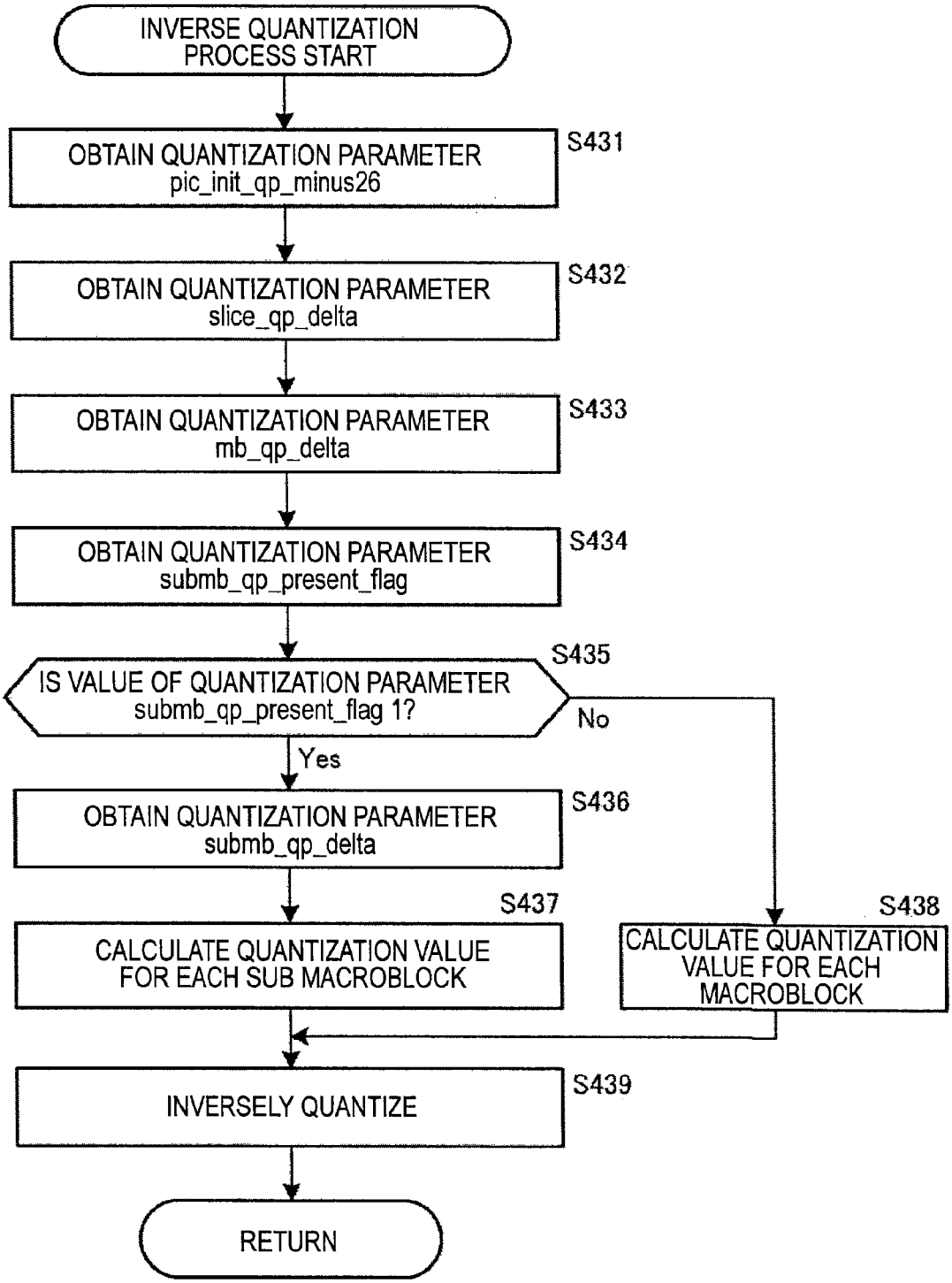

INVERSE QUANTIZATION PROCESS START
OBTAIN QUANTIZATION PARAMETER pic_init_qp_minus26
S431
OBTAIN QUANTIZATION PARAMETER slice_qp_delta
S432
OBTAIN QUANTIZATION PARAMETER mb_qp_delta
S433
OBTAIN QUANTIZATION PARAMETER submb_qp_present_flag
S434
IS VALUE OF QUANTIZATION PARAMETER submb_qp_present_flag 1?
S435
No
Yes
OBTAIN QUANTIZATION PARAMETER submb_qp_delta
S436
CALCULATE QUANTIZATION VALUE FOR EACH SUB MACROBLOCK
S437
CALCULATE QUANTIZATION VALUE FOR EACH MACROBLOCK
S438
INVERSELY QUANTIZE
S439
RETURN

FIG. 15

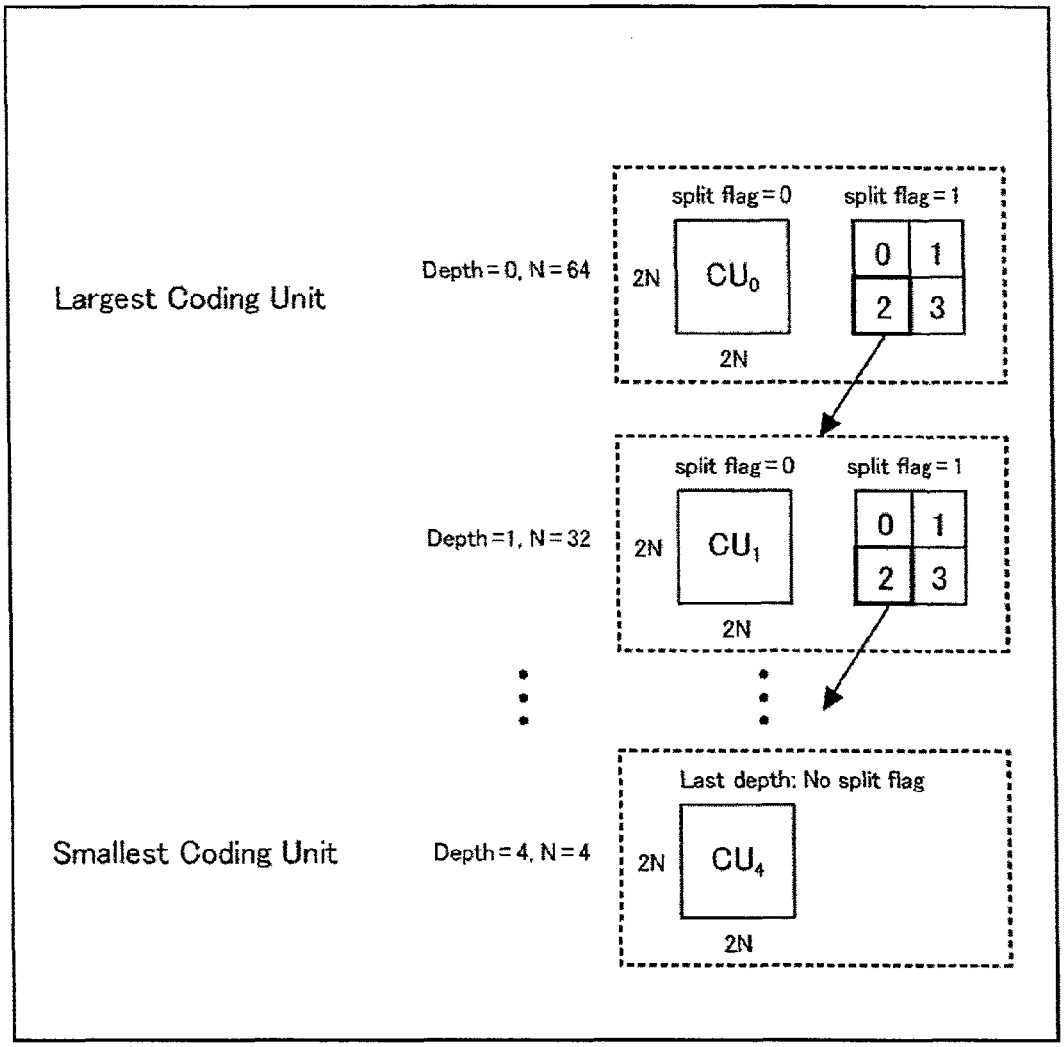

Largest Coding Unit
Depth = 0, N = 64
split flag = 0
split flag = 1
2N
CU0
2N
0
1
2
3
Depth = 1, N = 32
split flag = 0
split flag = 1
2N
CU1
2N
0
1
2
3
Smallest Coding Unit
Depth = 4, N = 4
Last depth: No split flag
2N
CU4
2N

FIG. 16

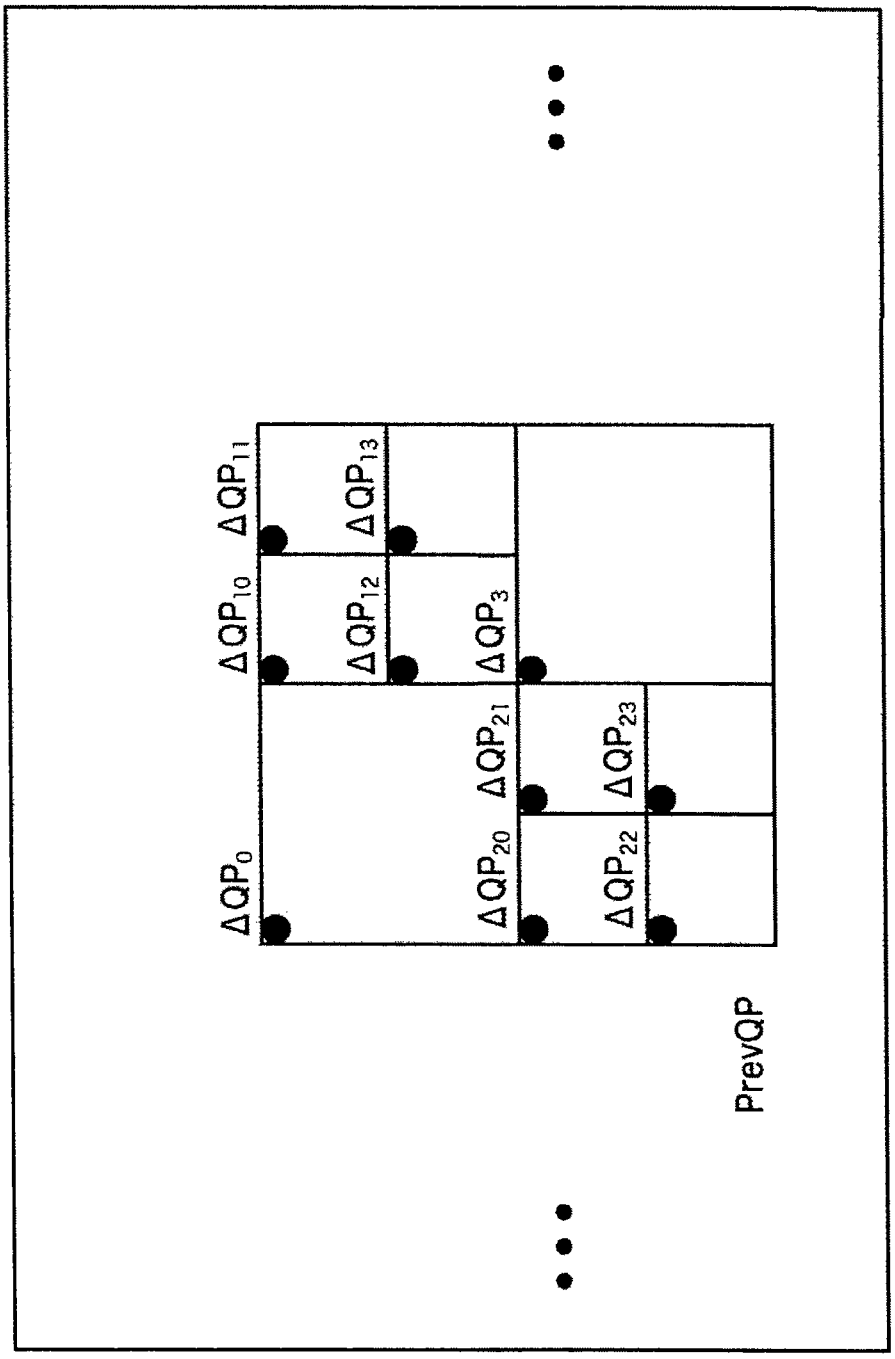

ΔQP11
ΔQP13
ΔQP10
ΔQP12
ΔQP3
ΔQP21
ΔQP23
ΔQP0
ΔQP20
ΔQP22
PrevQP

FIG. 17

coding_unit(x0, y0, currCodingUnitSize) {	C	Descriptor
if(x0+currCodingUnitSize < PicWidthInSamples$_L$ && y0+currCodingUnitSize < PicHeightInSamples$_L$ &&		
currCodingUnitSize > MinCodingUnitSize)		
split_coding_unit_flag	2	u(1) | ae(v)
if((split_coding_unit_flag && currCodingUnitSize == AlfMinCtrlCodingUnitSize) || (!split_coding_unit_flag && currCodingUnitSize > AlfCtrlMinCodingUnitSize)		
cu_qp_delta	2	se(v)
alf_flag	2	u(1) | ae(v)
if(split_coding_unit_flag) {		
splitCodingUnitSize = currCodingUnitSize >> 1		
x1 = x0 + splitCodingUnitSize		
y1 = y0 + splitCodingUnitSize		
coding_unit(x0, y0, splitCodingUnitSize)	2 | 3 | 4	
if(x1 < PicWidthInSamples$_L$)		
coding_unit(x1, y0, splitCodingUnitSize)	2 | 3 | 4	
if(y1 < PicHeightInSamples$_L$)		
coding_unit(x0, y1, splitCodingUnitSize)	2 | 3 | 4	
if(x1 < PicWidthInSamples$_L$ && y1 < PicHeightInSamples$_L$)		
coding_unit(x1, y1, splitCodingUnitSize)	2 | 3 | 4	
} else {		
prediction_unit(x0, y0, currCodingUnitSize)	2	
if(PredMode != MODE_SKIP || !(PredMode == MODE_INTRA && planar_flag == 1))		
transform_unit(x0, y0, currCodingUnitSize)	3 | 4	
}		
}		

FIG. 18

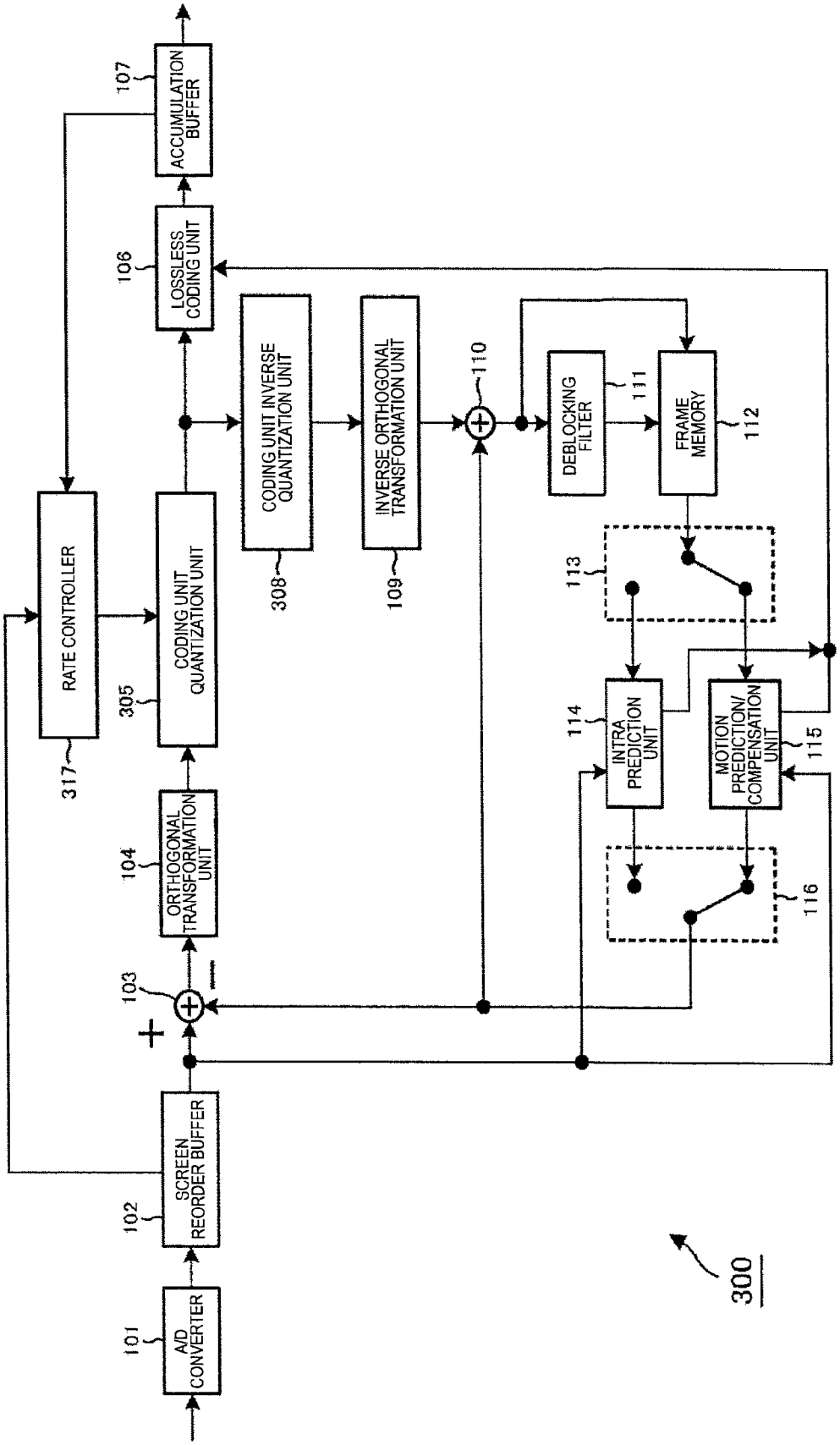

A/D CONVERTER
101
SCREEN REORDER BUFFER
102
ORTHOGONAL TRANSFORMATION UNIT
104
CODING UNIT QUANTIZATION UNIT
305
RATE CONTROLLER
317
CODING UNIT INVERSE QUANTIZATION UNIT
308
INVERSE ORTHOGONAL TRANSFORMATION UNIT
109
DEBLOCKING FILTER
111
FRAME MEMORY
112
INTRA PREDICTION UNIT
114
MOTION PREDICTION/ COMPENSATION UNIT
115
LOSSLESS CODING UNIT
106
ACCUMULATION BUFFER
107
103
110
113
116
300

FIG. 19

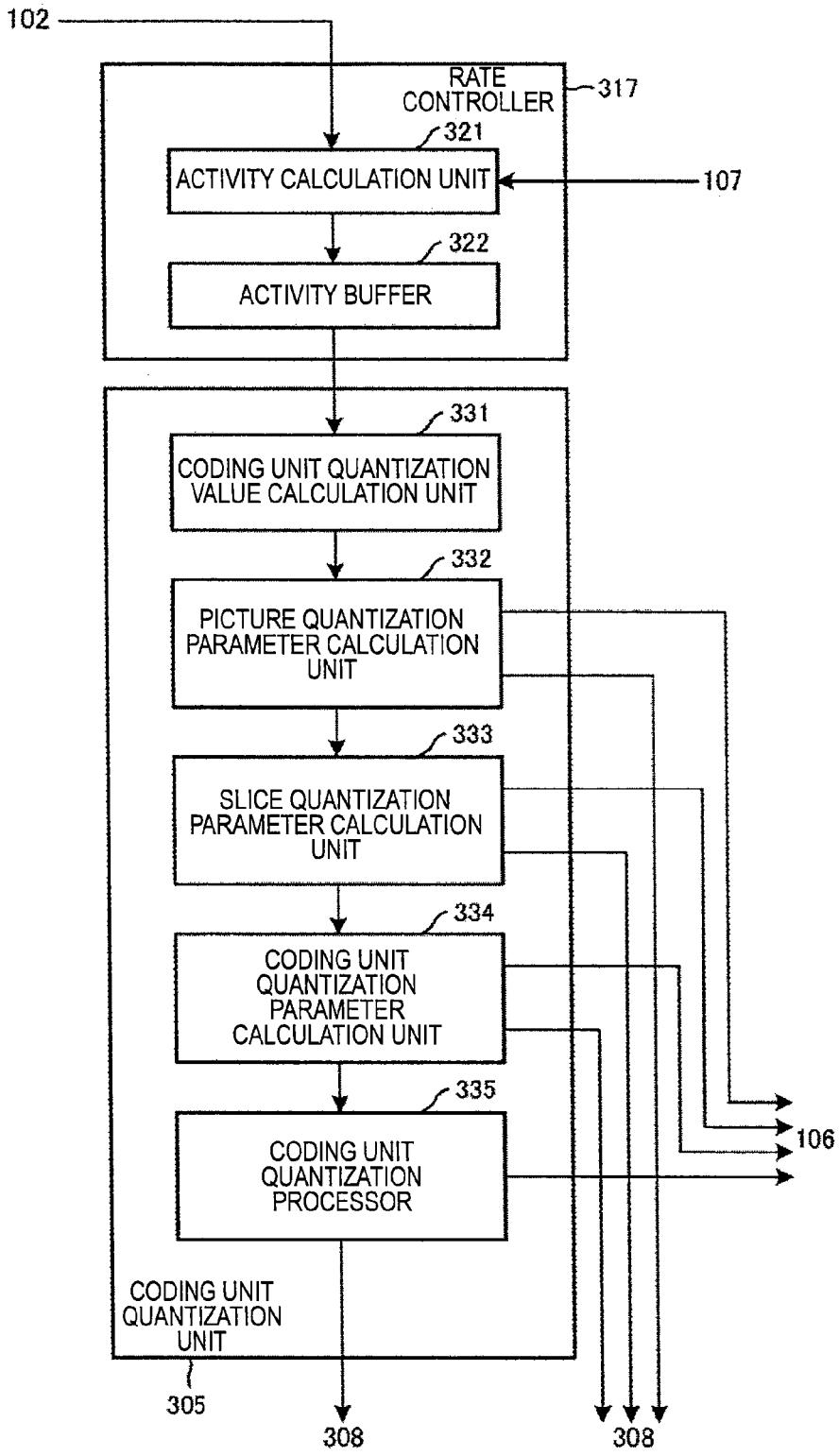

102
RATE CONTROLLER
317
321
ACTIVITY CALCULATION UNIT
107
322
ACTIVITY BUFFER
331
CODING UNIT QUANTIZATION VALUE CALCULATION UNIT
332
PICTURE QUANTIZATION PARAMETER CALCULATION UNIT
333
SLICE QUANTIZATION PARAMETER CALCULATION UNIT
334
CODING UNIT QUANTIZATION PARAMETER CALCULATION UNIT
335
CODING UNIT QUANTIZATION PROCESSOR
106
CODING UNIT QUANTIZATION UNIT
305
308
308

FIG. 20

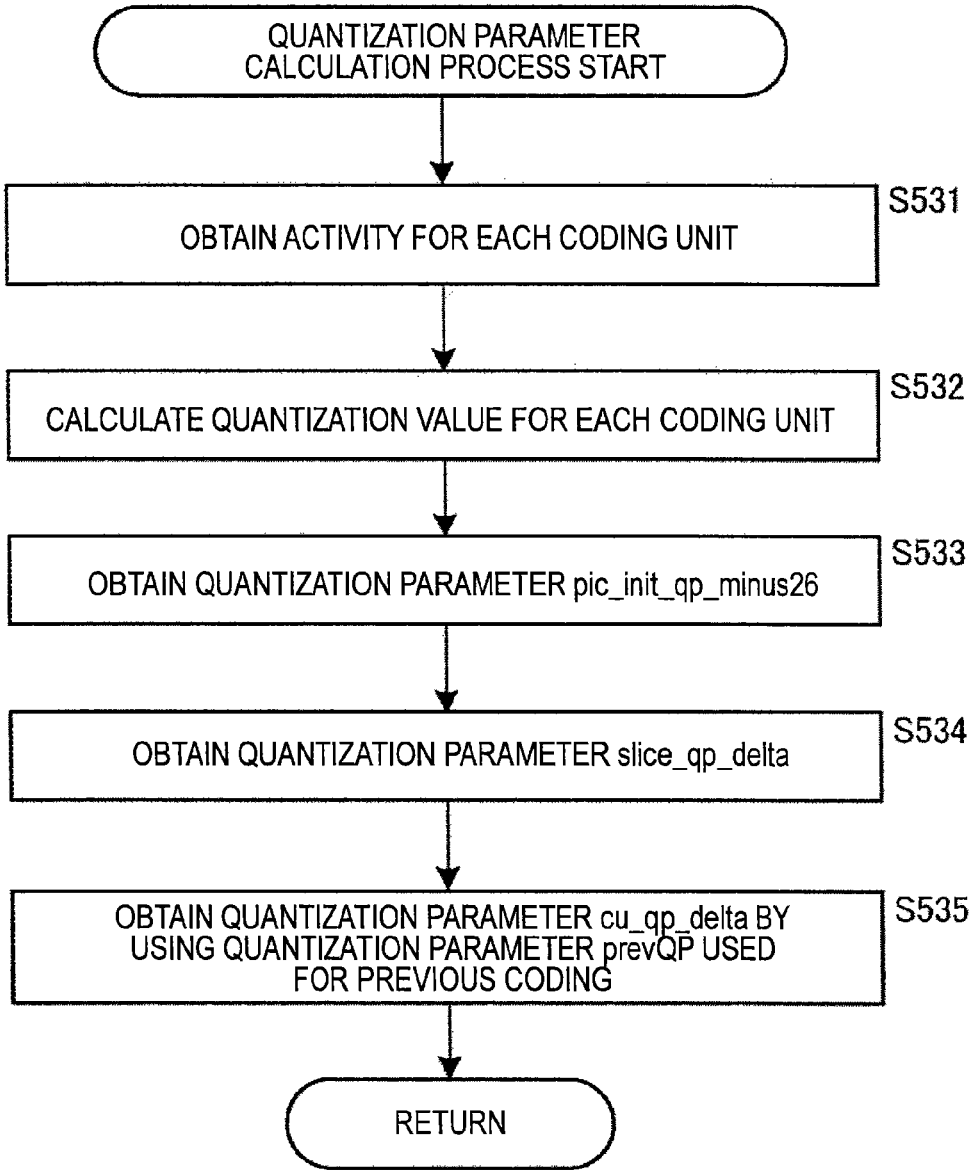

QUANTIZATION PARAMETER CALCULATION PROCESS START
OBTAIN ACTIVITY FOR EACH CODING UNIT
S531
CALCULATE QUANTIZATION VALUE FOR EACH CODING UNIT
S532
OBTAIN QUANTIZATION PARAMETER pic_init_qp_minus26
S533
OBTAIN QUANTIZATION PARAMETER slice_qp_delta
S534
OBTAIN QUANTIZATION PARAMETER cu_qp_delta BY USING QUANTIZATION PARAMETER prevQP USED FOR PREVIOUS CODING
S535
RETURN

FIG. 21

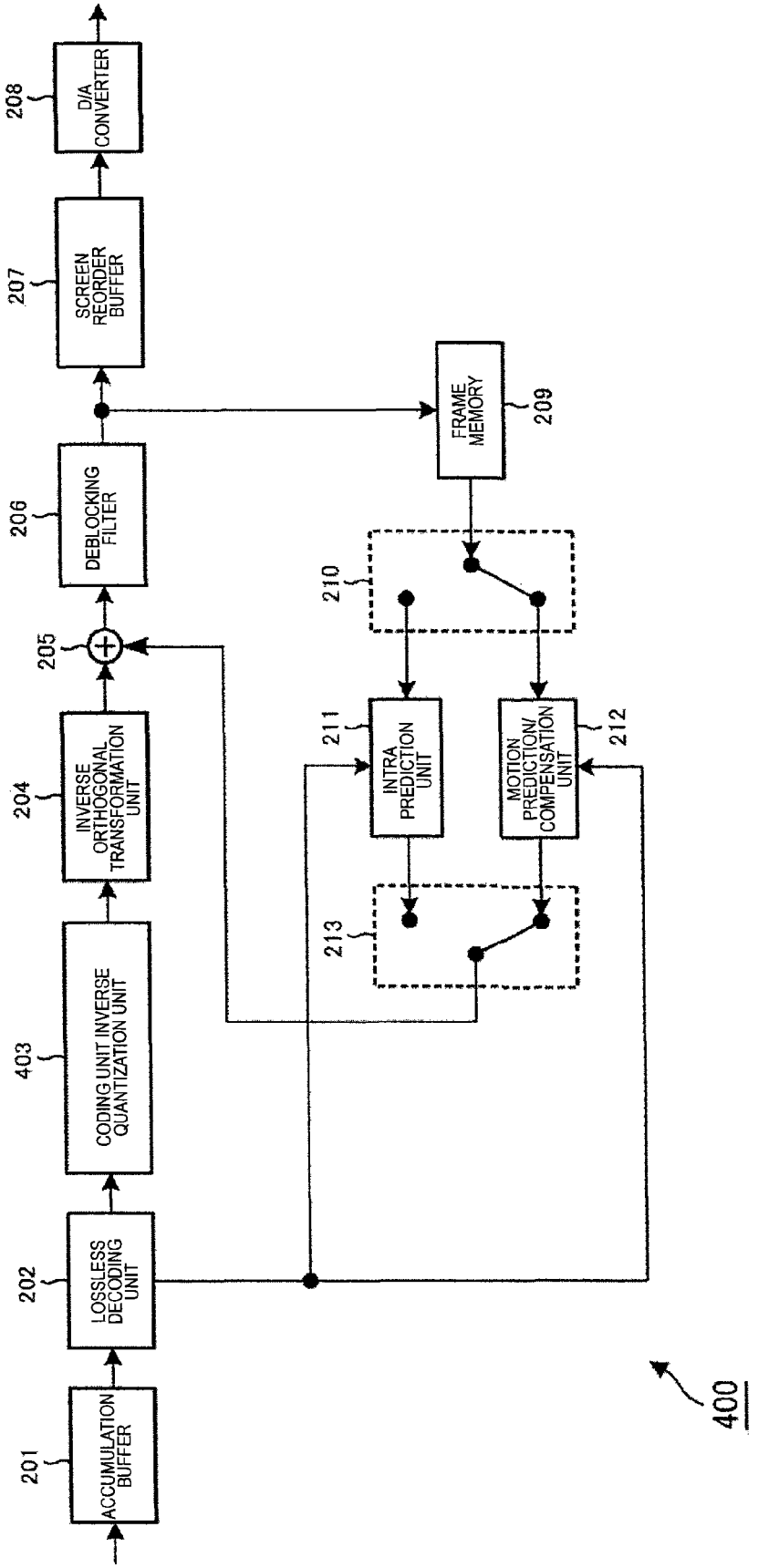

ACCUMULATION BUFFER
201
LOSSLESS DECODING UNIT
202
CODING UNIT INVERSE QUANTIZATION UNIT
403
INVERSE ORTHOGONAL TRANSFORMATION UNIT
204
205
DEBLOCKING FILTER
206
SCREEN REORDER BUFFER
207
D/A CONVERTER
208
FRAME MEMORY
209
210
INTRA PREDICTION UNIT
211
MOTION PREDICTION/ COMPENSATION UNIT
212
213
400

FIG. 22

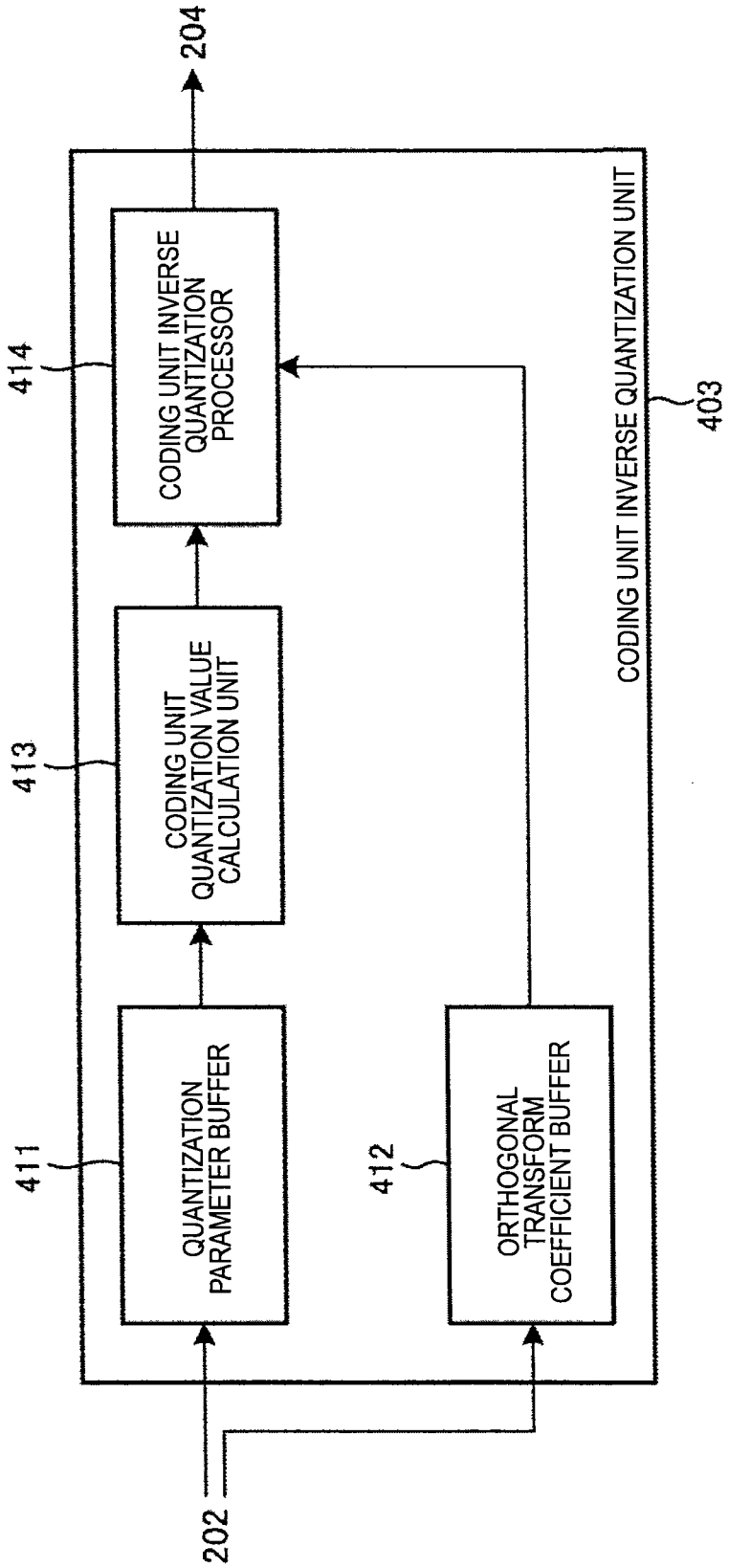

204
CODING UNIT INVERSE QUANTIZATION UNIT
403
414
CODING UNIT INVERSE QUANTIZATION PROCESSOR
413
CODING UNIT QUANTIZATION VALUE CALCULATION UNIT
411
QUANTIZATION PARAMETER BUFFER
412
ORTHOGONAL TRANSFORM COEFFICIENT BUFFER
202

FIG. 23

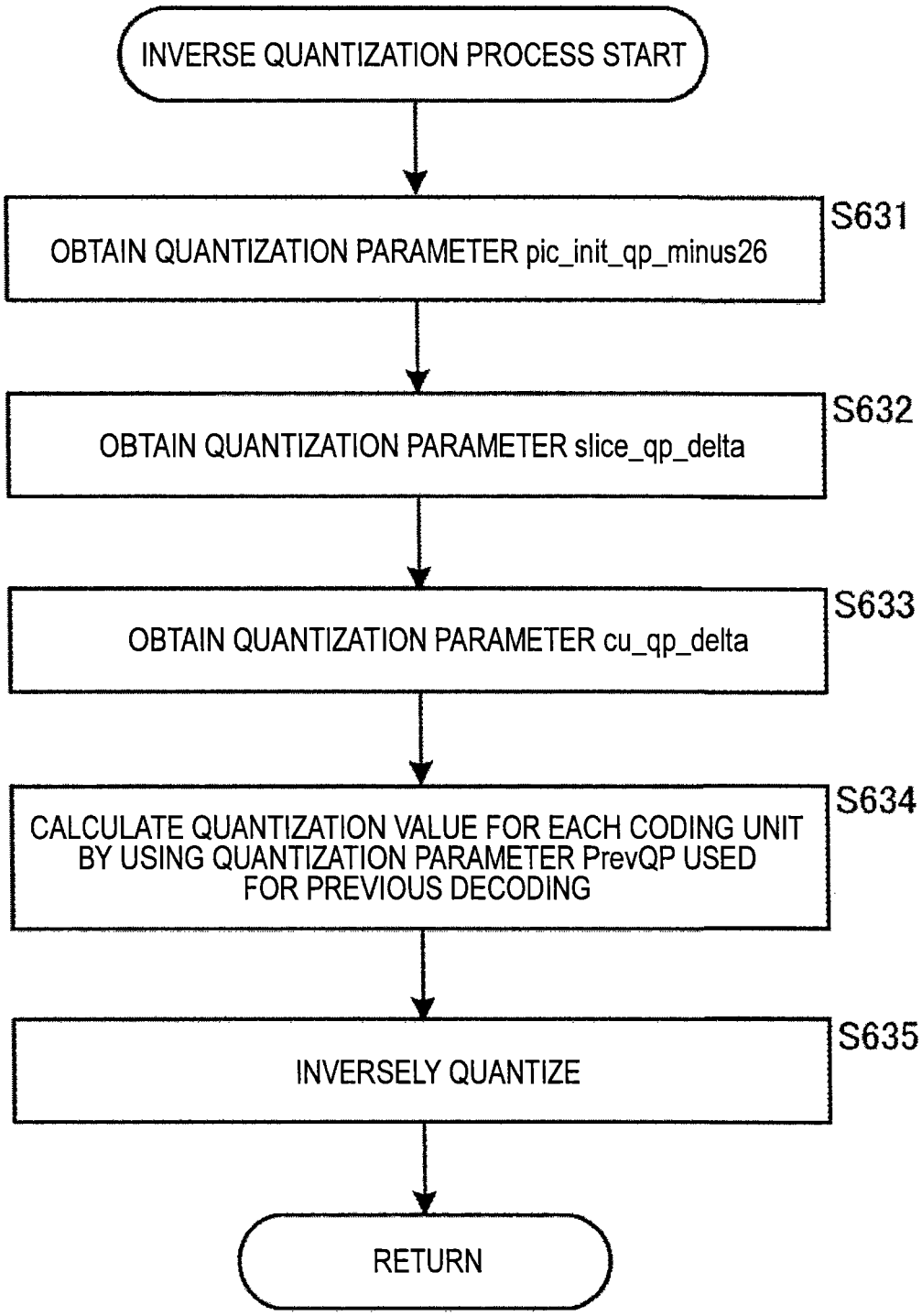
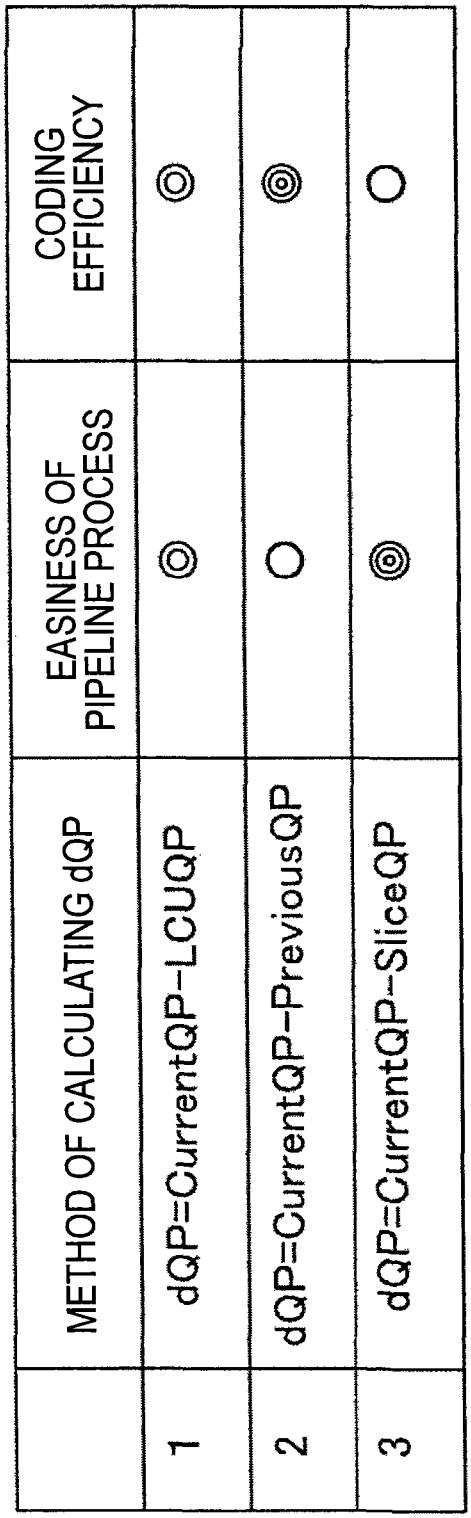

INVERSE QUANTIZATION PROCESS START
OBTAIN QUANTIZATION PARAMETER pic_init_qp_minus26
S631
OBTAIN QUANTIZATION PARAMETER slice_qp_delta
S632
OBTAIN QUANTIZATION PARAMETER cu_qp_delta
S633
CALCULATE QUANTIZATION VALUE FOR EACH CODING UNIT BY USING QUANTIZATION PARAMETER PrevQP USED FOR PREVIOUS DECODING
S634
INVERSELY QUANTIZE
S635
RETURN

FIG. 24



	METHOD OF CALCULATING dQP	EASINESS OF PIPELINE PROCESS	CODING EFFICIENCY
1	dQP=CurrentQP−LCUQP	◎	◎
2	dQP=CurrentQP−PreviousQP	○	◎
3	dQP=CurrentQP−SliceQP	◎	○

FIG. 25

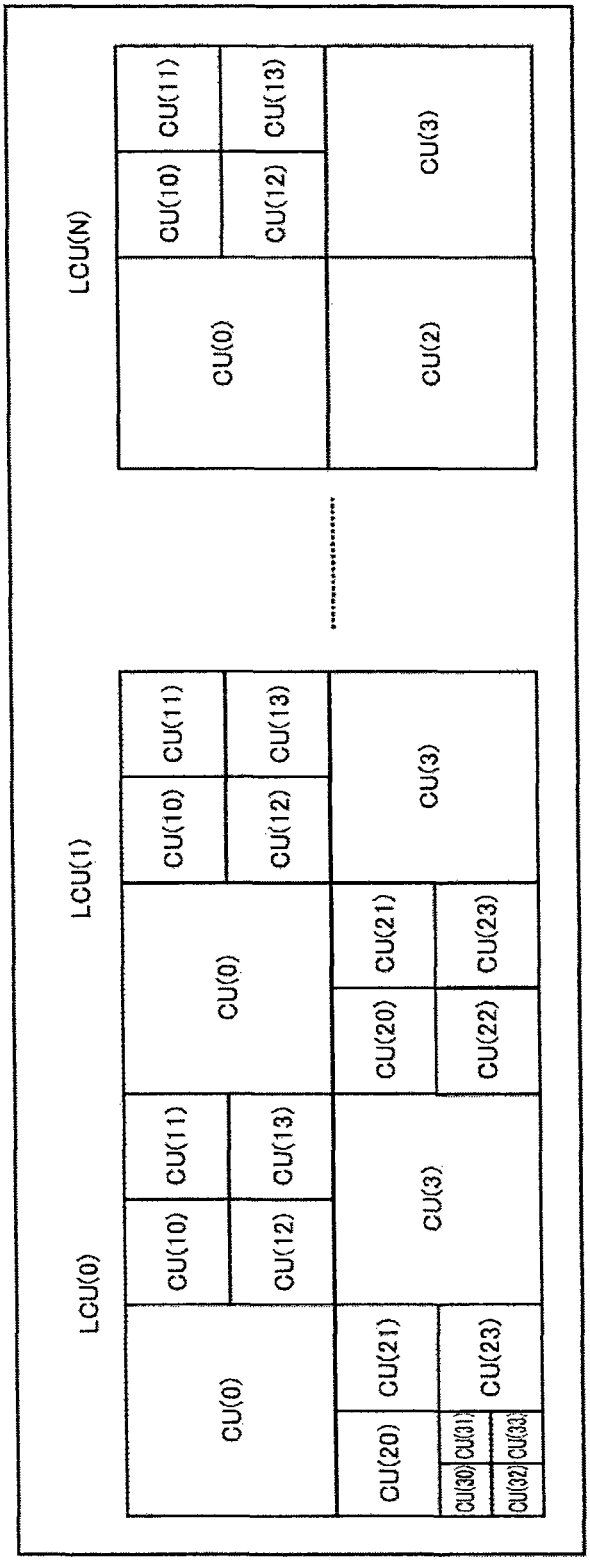

LCU(0)
CU(0)
CU(10)
CU(12)
CU(11)
CU(13)
CU(3)
CU(20)
CU(21)
CU(22)
CU(23)
CU(30)
CU(31)
CU(32)
CU(33)
LCU(1)
CU(0)
CU(10)
CU(12)
CU(11)
CU(13)
CU(3)
CU(20)
CU(21)
CU(22)
CU(23)
LCU(N)
CU(0)
CU(10)
CU(12)
CU(11)
CU(13)
CU(2)
CU(3)

FIG. 26

1	slice_header( ) {	C	Descriptor
2	first_lctb_in_slice	2	ue(v)
3	slice_type	2	ue(v)
4	pic_parameter_set_id	2	ue(v)
5	frame_num	2	u(v)
6	if(IdrPicFlag)		
7	idr_pic_id	2	ue(v)
8	pic_order_cnt_lsb	2	u(v)
9	if(slice_type == P || slice_type == B) {		
10	num_ref_idx_active_override_flag	2	u(1)
11	if(num_ref_idx_active_override_flag) {		
12	num_ref_idx_l0_active_minus1	2	ue(v)
13	if(slice_type == B)		
14	num_ref_idx_l1_active_minus1	2	ue(v)
15	}		
16	}		
17	if(nal_ref_idc != 0)		
18	dec_ref_pic_marking( )	2	
19	if(entropy_coding_mode_flag && slice_type != I)		
20	cabac_init_idc	2	ue(v)
21	slice_qp_delta	2	se(v)
22	MinCUForDeltaQPCoded	2	ue(v)
23	alf_param()		
24	if(slice_type == P || slice_type == B) {		
25	mc_interpolation_idc	2	ue(v)
26	mv_competition_flag	2	u(1)
27	if (mv_competition_flag) {		
28	mv_competition_temporal_flag	2	u(1)
29	}		
30	}		
31	if (slice_type == B && mv_competition_flag)		
32	collocated_from_l0_flag	2	u(1)
33			
34	sifo_param()		
35	if (entropy_coding_mode_flag == 3)		
36	parallel_v2v_header()	2	
37	edge_based_prediction_flag	2	u(1)
38	if(edge_prediction_ipd_flag = = 1)		
39	threshold_edge	2	u(8)
40	}		

FIG. 27

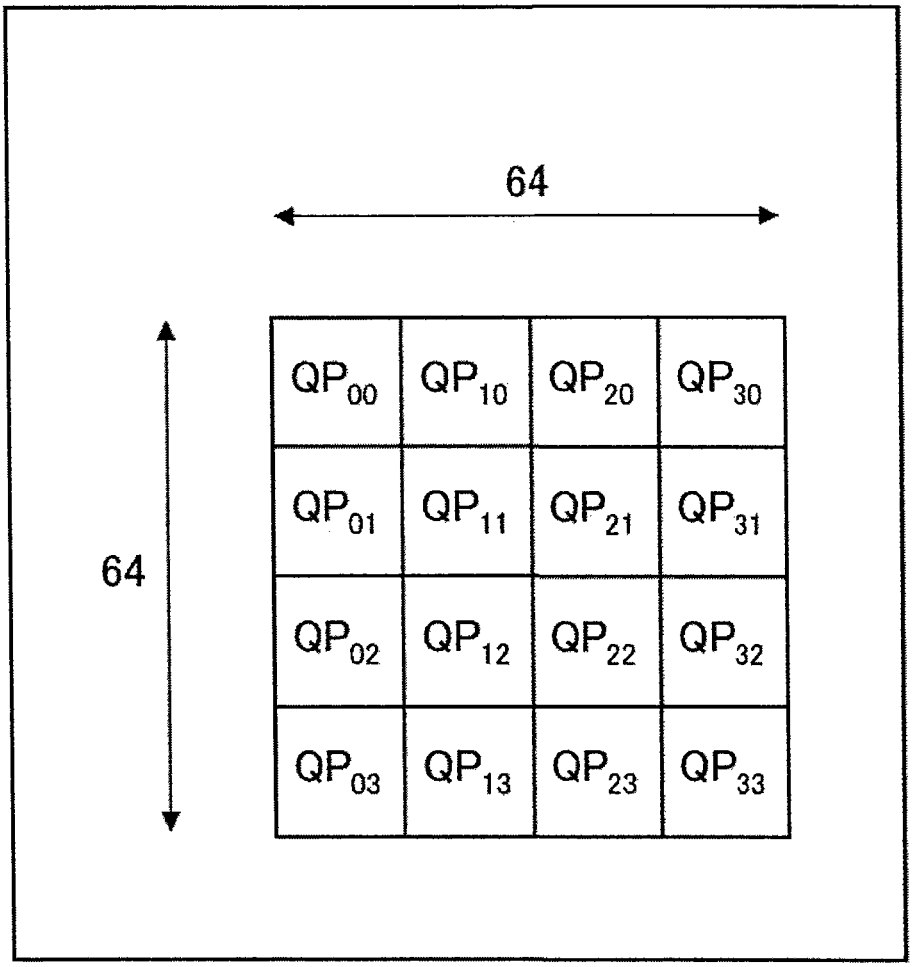

64
64
QP00
QP10
QP20
QP30
QP01
QP11
QP21
QP31
QP02
QP12
QP22
QP32
QP03
QP13
QP23
QP33

FIG. 28

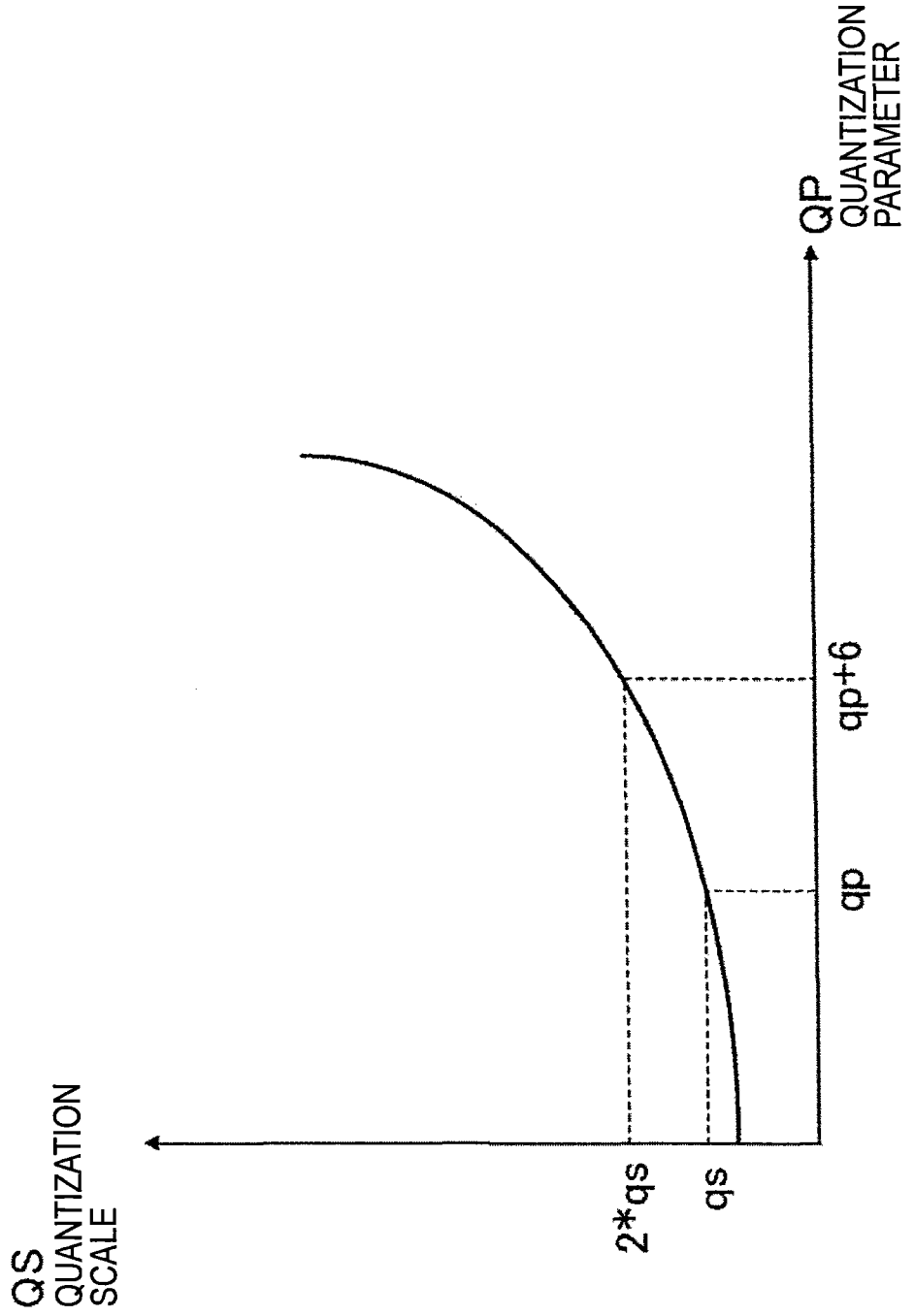

QS
QUANTIZATION
SCALE
QP
QUANTIZATION
PARAMETER
qp+6
qp
2*qs
qs

FIG. 29

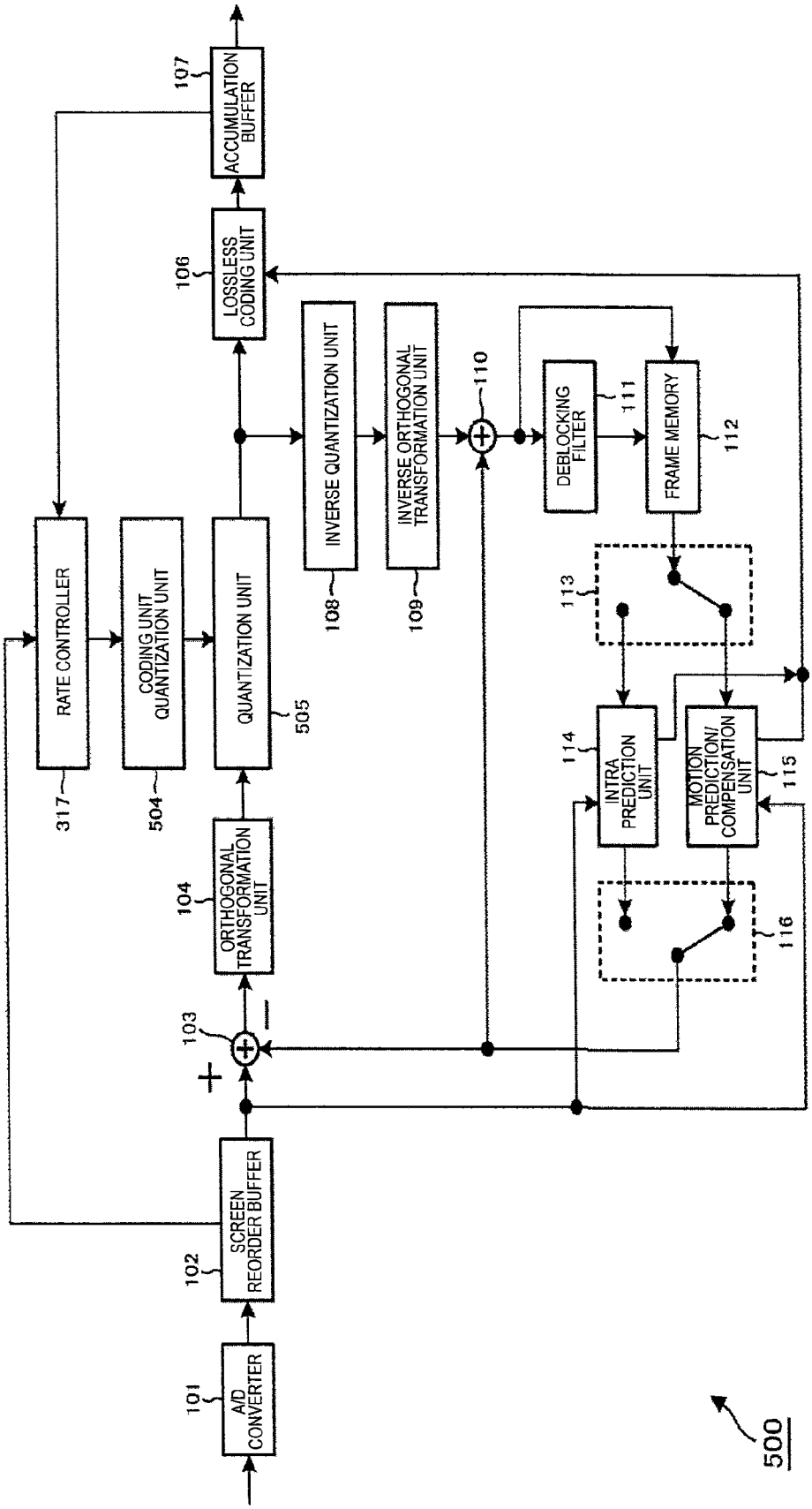

A/D CONVERTER
101
SCREEN REORDER BUFFER
102
103
ORTHOGONAL TRANSFORMATION UNIT
104
QUANTIZATION UNIT
505
CODING UNIT QUANTIZATION UNIT
504
RATE CONTROLLER
317
ACCUMULATION BUFFER
107
LOSSLESS CODING UNIT
106
INVERSE QUANTIZATION UNIT
108
INVERSE ORTHOGONAL TRANSFORMATION UNIT
109
110
DEBLOCKING FILTER
111
FRAME MEMORY
112
113
INTRA PREDICTION UNIT
114
MOTION PREDICTION/ COMPENSATION UNIT
115
116
500

FIG. 30

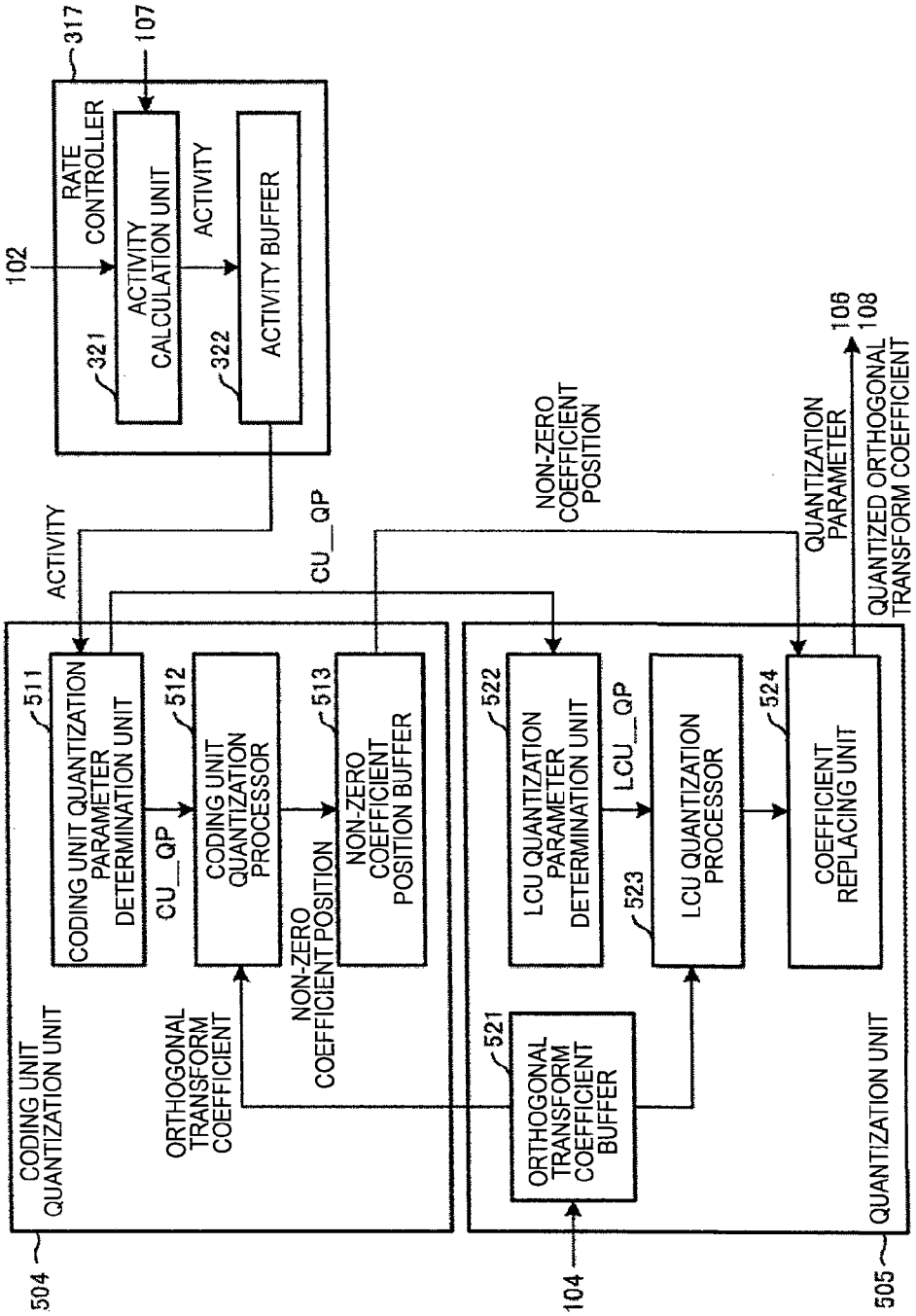

317
107
RATE CONTROLLER
ACTIVITY CALCULATION UNIT
ACTIVITY
ACTIVITY BUFFER
102
321
322
ACTIVITY
CU_QP
NON-ZERO COEFFICIENT POSITION
QUANTIZATION PARAMETER
106
108
QUANTIZED ORTHOGONAL TRANSFORM COEFFICIENT
511
CODING UNIT QUANTIZATION PARAMETER DETERMINATION UNIT
512
CODING UNIT QUANTIZATION PROCESSOR
513
NON-ZERO COEFFICIENT POSITION BUFFER
522
LCU QUANTIZATION PARAMETER DETERMINATION UNIT
LCU_QP
523
LCU QUANTIZATION PROCESSOR
524
COEFFICIENT REPLACING UNIT
ORTHOGONAL TRANSFORM COEFFICIENT
NON-ZERO COEFFICIENT POSITION
521
ORTHOGONAL TRANSFORM COEFFICIENT BUFFER
CODING UNIT QUANTIZATION UNIT
QUANTIZATION UNIT
504
104
505

FIG. 31

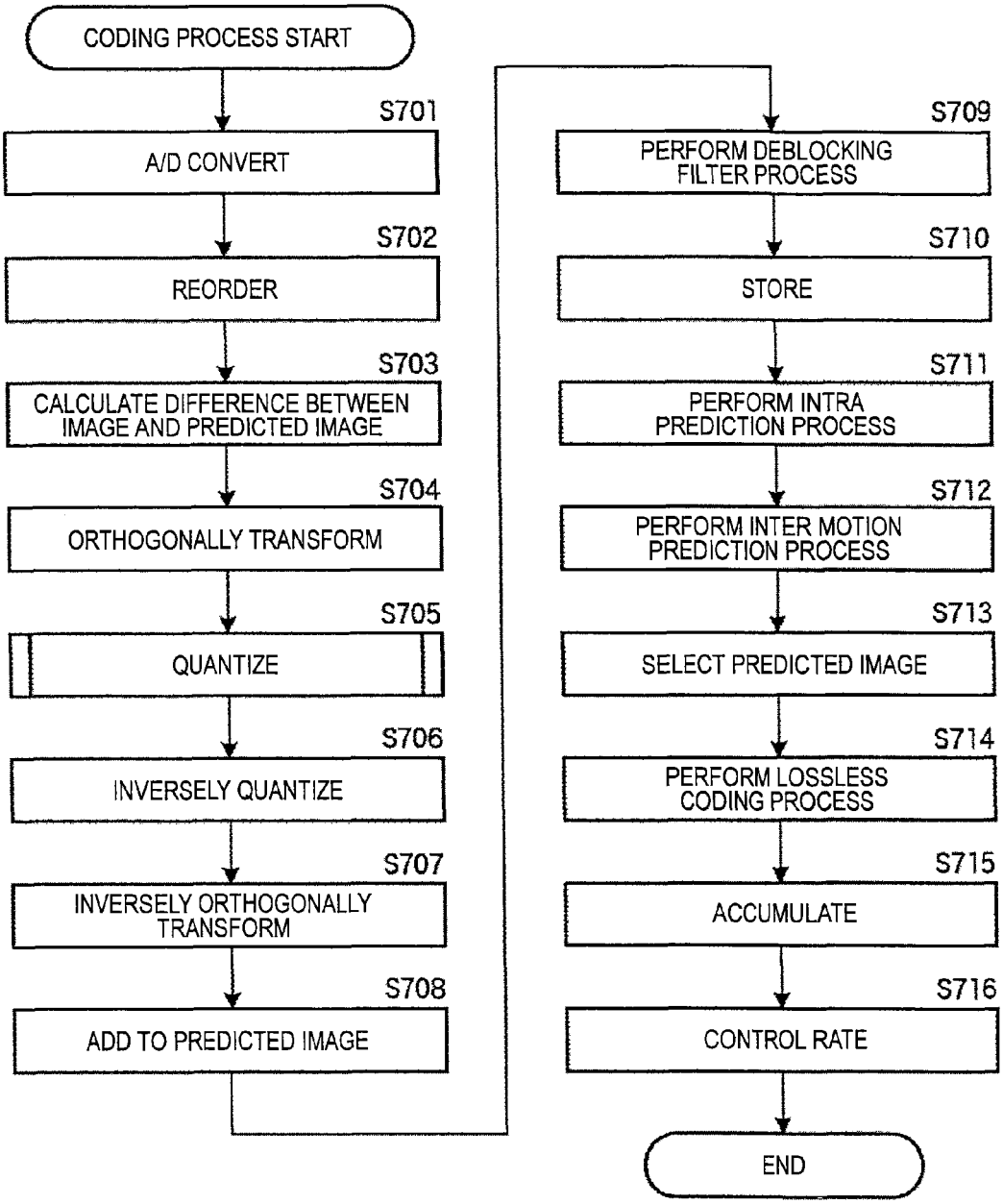

CODING PROCESS START
S701
A/D CONVERT
S702
REORDER
S703
CALCULATE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN IMAGE AND PREDICTED IMAGE
S704
ORTHOGONALLY TRANSFORM
S705
QUANTIZE
S706
INVERSELY QUANTIZE
S707
INVERSELY ORTHOGONALLY TRANSFORM
S708
ADD TO PREDICTED IMAGE
S709
PERFORM DEBLOCKING FILTER PROCESS
S710
STORE
S711
PERFORM INTRA PREDICTION PROCESS
S712
PERFORM INTER MOTION PREDICTION PROCESS
S713
SELECT PREDICTED IMAGE
S714
PERFORM LOSSLESS CODING PROCESS
S715
ACCUMULATE
S716
CONTROL RATE
END

FIG. 32

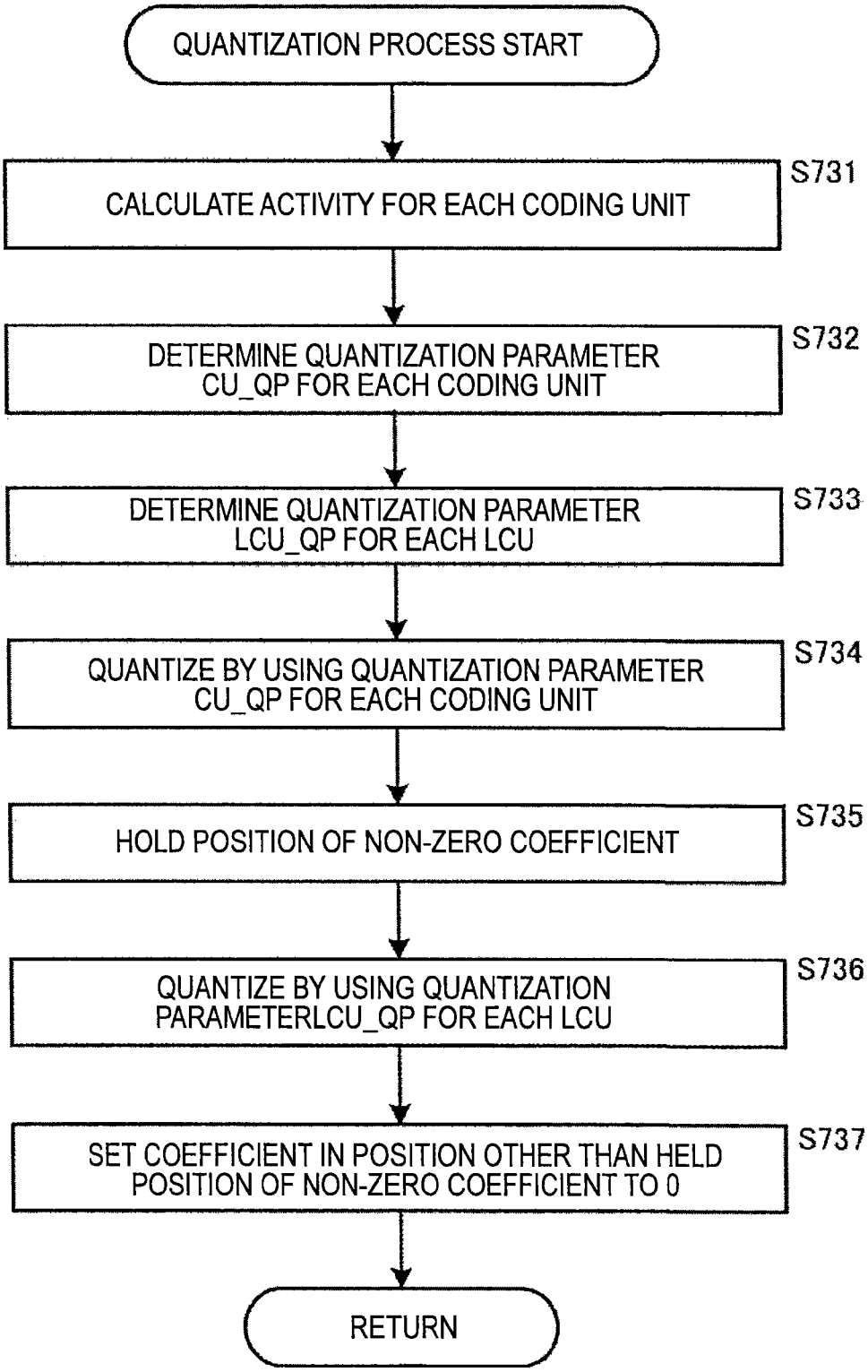

QUANTIZATION PROCESS START
CALCULATE ACTIVITY FOR EACH CODING UNIT
S731
DETERMINE QUANTIZATION PARAMETER CU_QP FOR EACH CODING UNIT
S732
DETERMINE QUANTIZATION PARAMETER LCU_QP FOR EACH LCU
S733
QUANTIZE BY USING QUANTIZATION PARAMETER CU_QP FOR EACH CODING UNIT
S734
HOLD POSITION OF NON-ZERO COEFFICIENT
S735
QUANTIZE BY USING QUANTIZATION PARAMETERLCU_QP FOR EACH LCU
S736
SET COEFFICIENT IN POSITION OTHER THAN HELD POSITION OF NON-ZERO COEFFICIENT TO 0
S737
RETURN

FIG. 33

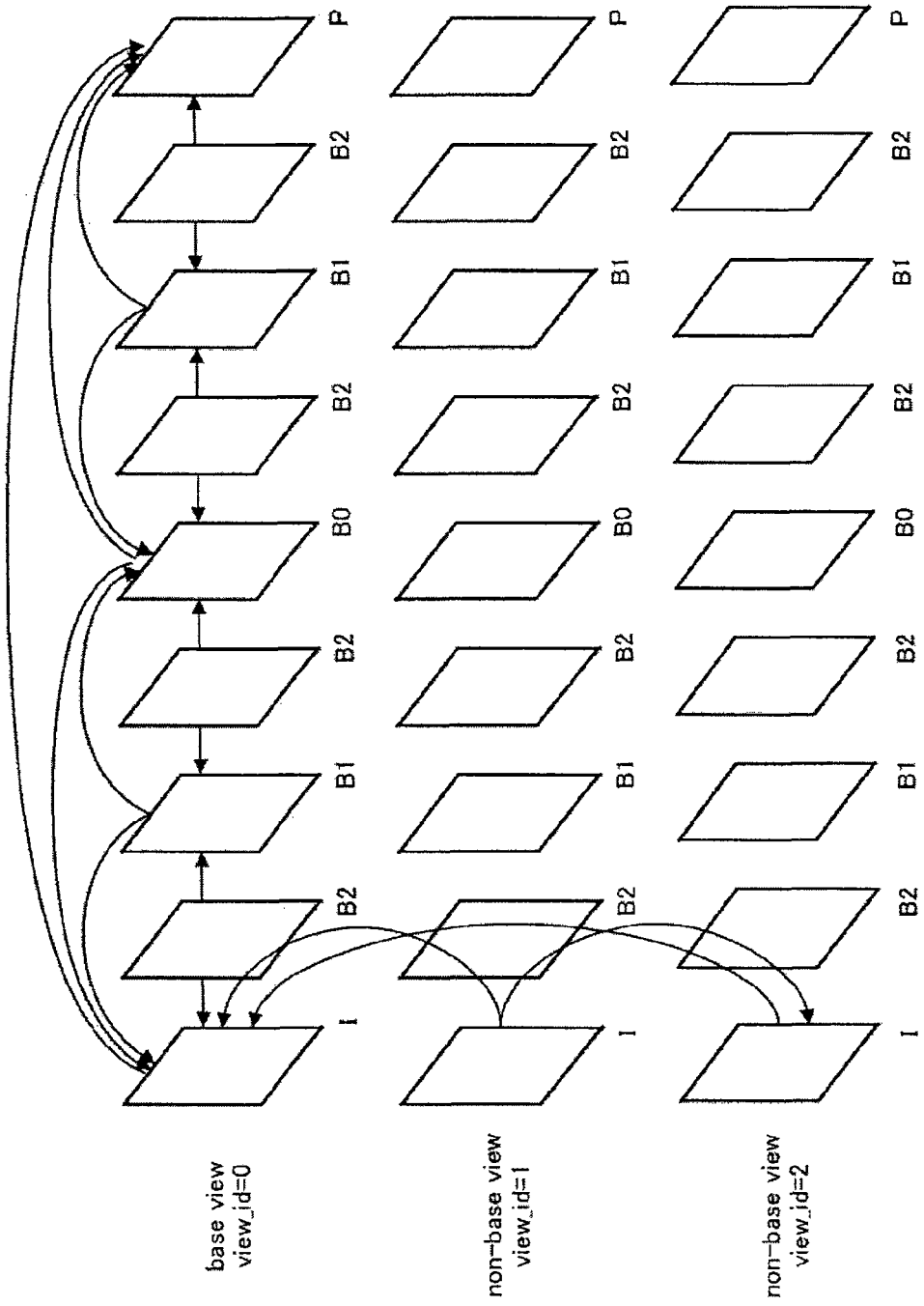

P
B2
B1
B2
B0
B2
B1
B2
I
base view
view_id=0
non-base view
view_id=1
non-base view
view_id=2

FIG. 34

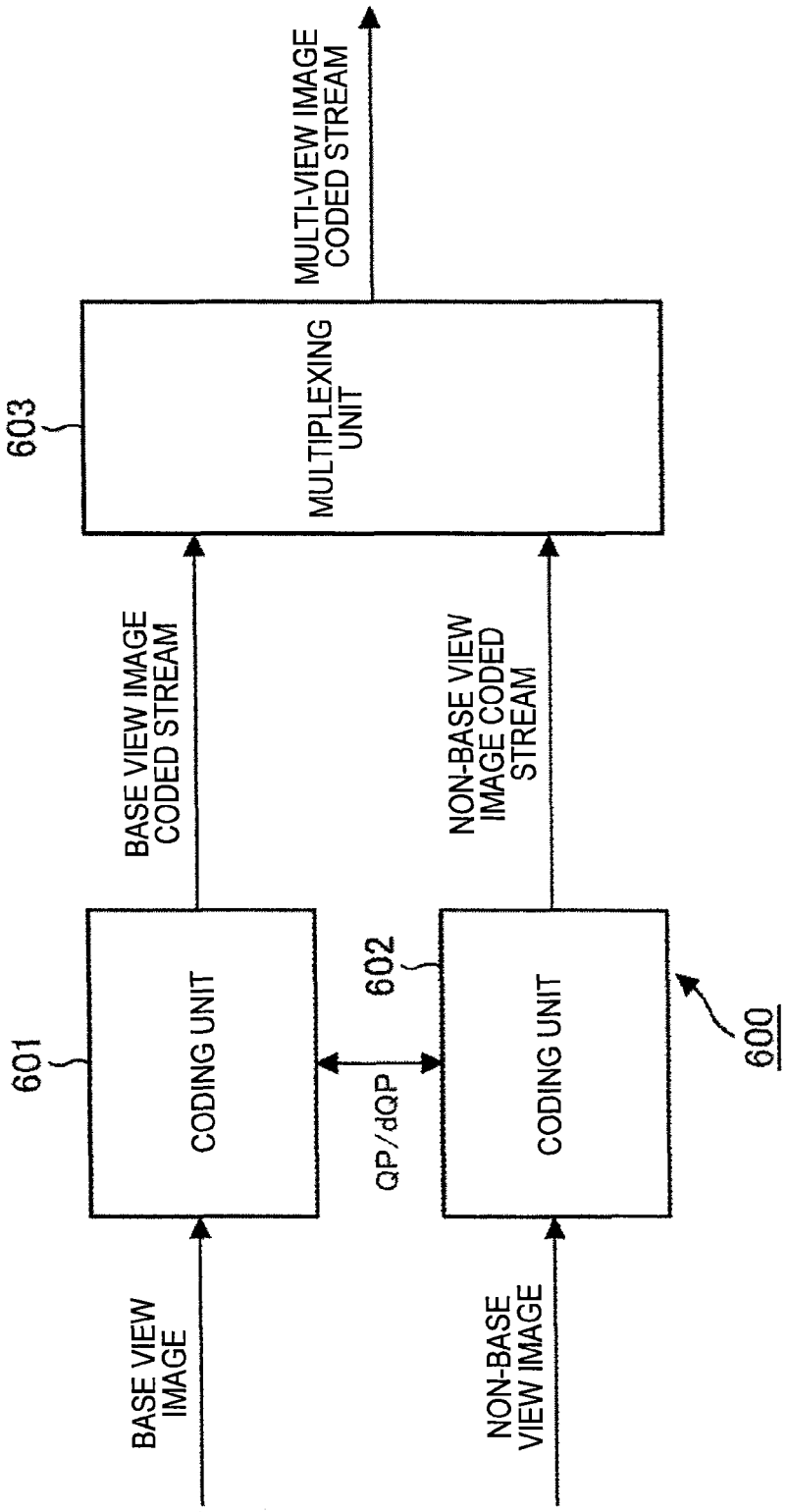

MULTI-VIEW IMAGE CODED STREAM
603
MULTIPLEXING UNIT
BASE VIEW IMAGE CODED STREAM
NON-BASE VIEW IMAGE CODED STREAM
601
CODING UNIT
602
CODING UNIT
600
QP/dQP
BASE VIEW IMAGE
NON-BASE VIEW IMAGE

FIG. 35

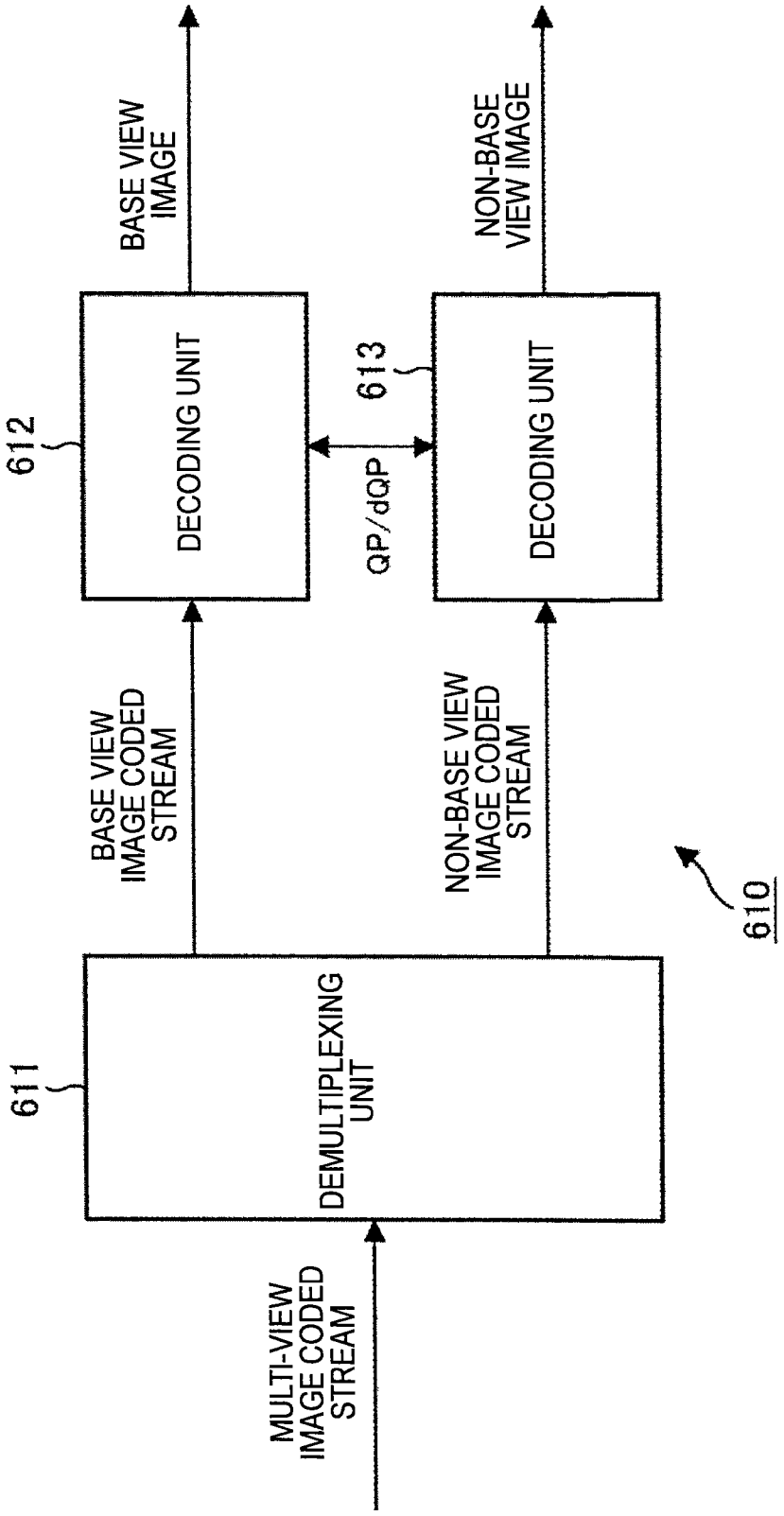

610
611
DEMULTIPLEXING UNIT
612
DECODING UNIT
613
DECODING UNIT
MULTI-VIEW IMAGE CODED STREAM
BASE VIEW IMAGE CODED STREAM
NON-BASE VIEW IMAGE CODED STREAM
QP/dQP
BASE VIEW IMAGE
NON-BASE VIEW IMAGE

FIG. 36

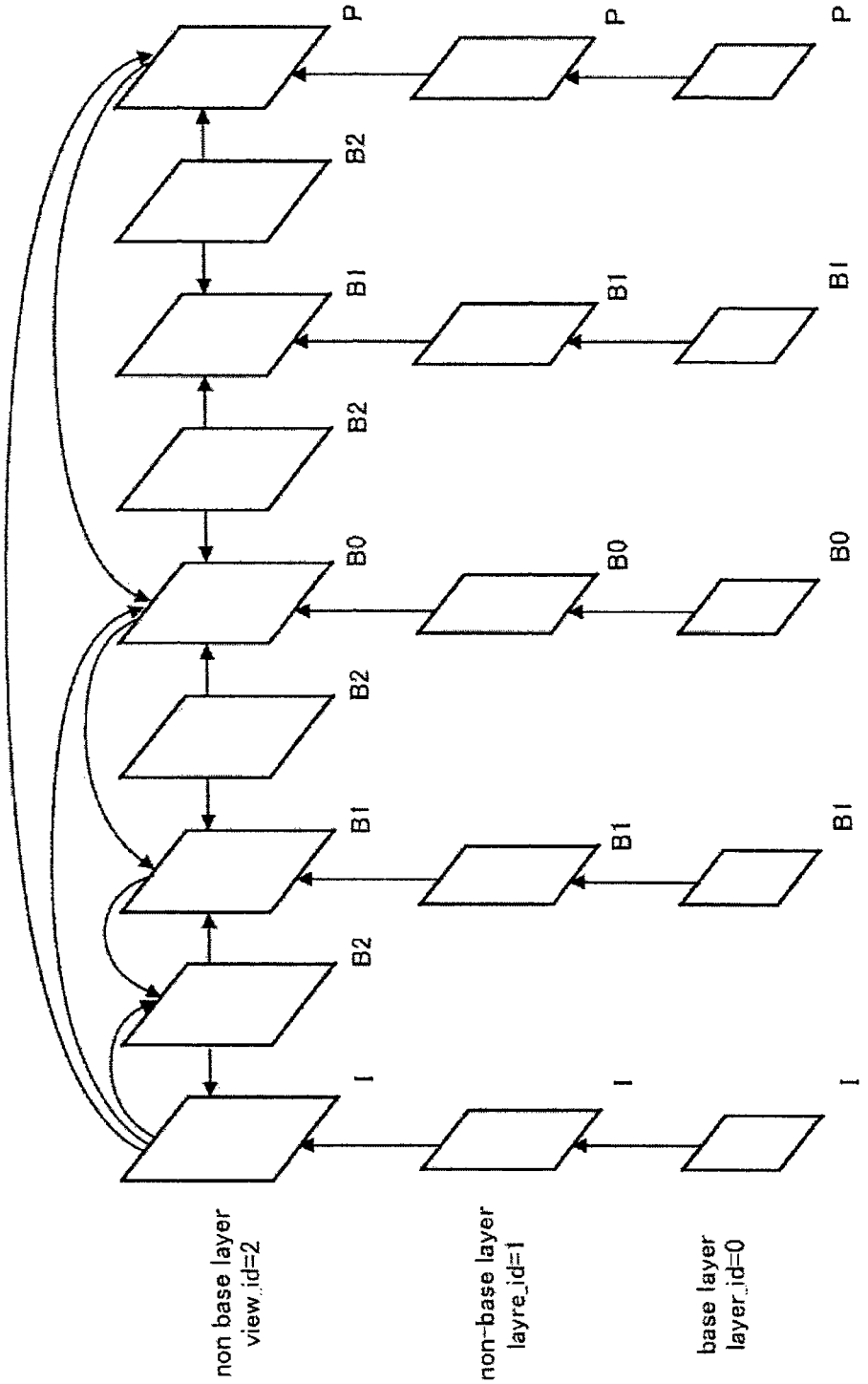

P
P
P
B2
B1
B1
B1
B2
B0
B0
B0
B2
B1
B1
B1
B2
I
I
I
non base layer
view_id=2
non-base layer
layre_id=1
base layer
layer_id=0

FIG. 37

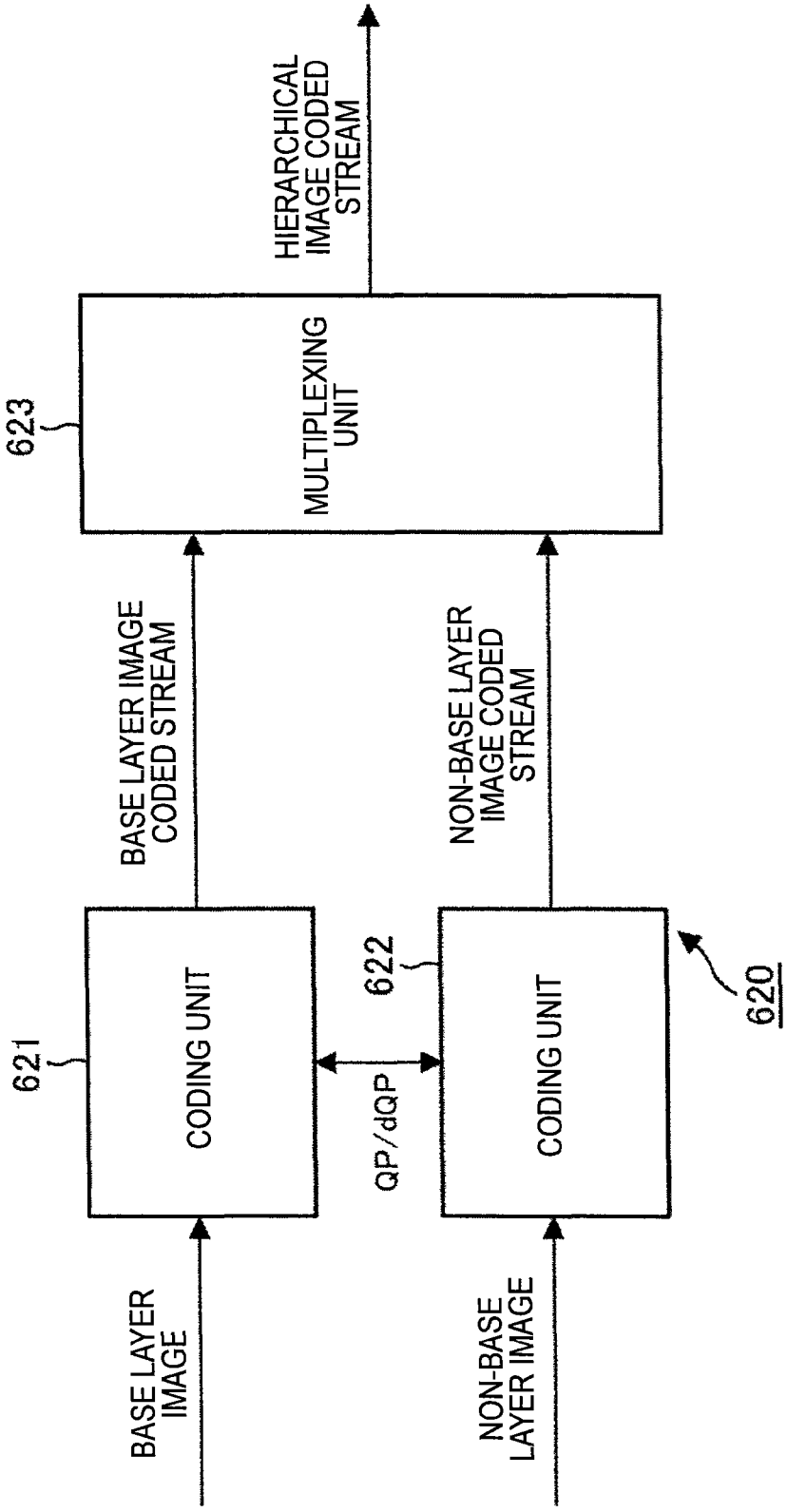

HIERARCHICAL IMAGE CODED STREAM
623
MULTIPLEXING UNIT
BASE LAYER IMAGE CODED STREAM
NON-BASE LAYER IMAGE CODED STREAM
621
CODING UNIT
622
CODING UNIT
620
QP/dQP
BASE LAYER IMAGE
NON-BASE LAYER IMAGE

FIG. 38

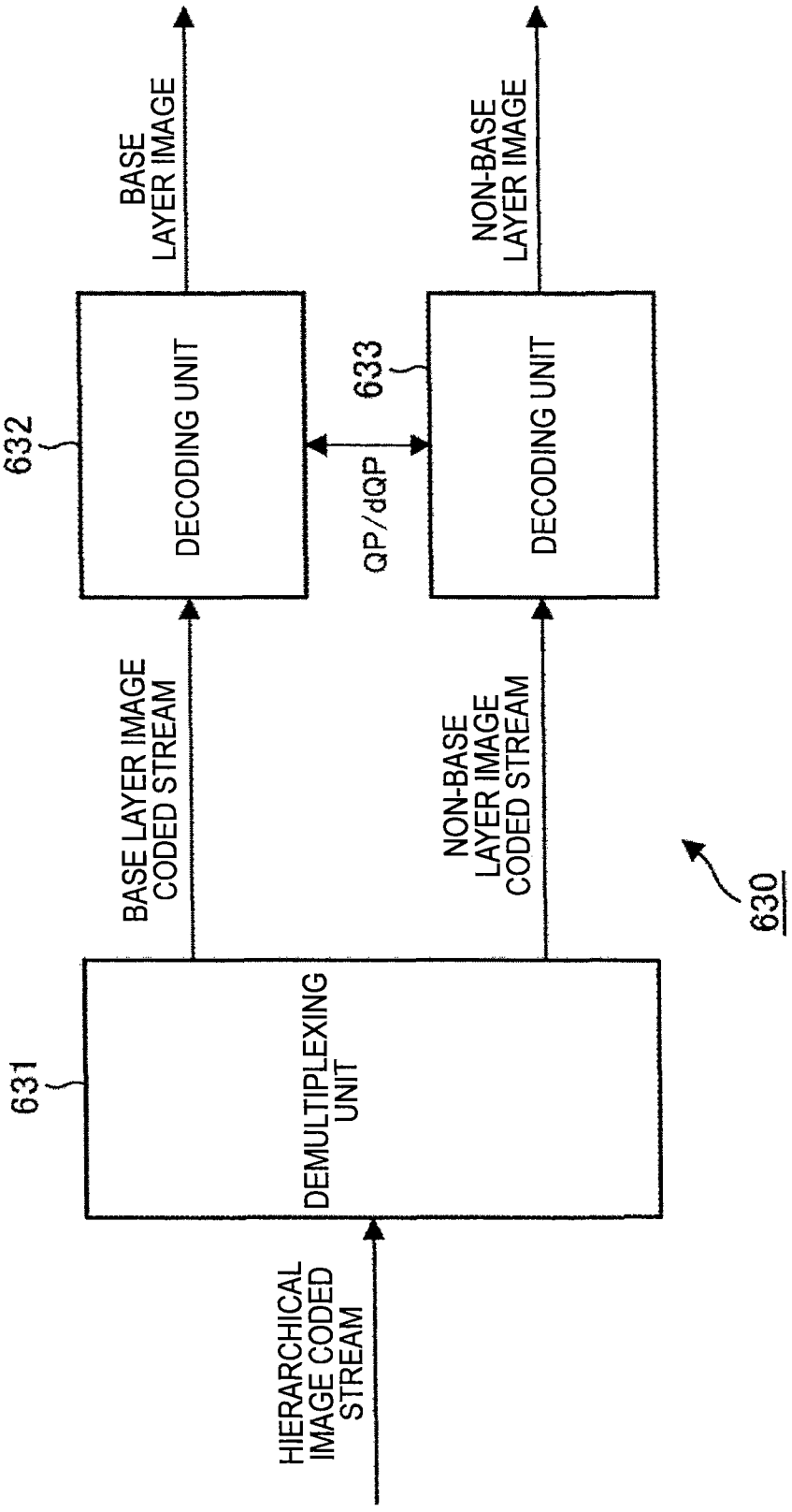

HIERARCHICAL IMAGE CODED STREAM
631
DEMULTIPLEXING UNIT
BASE LAYER IMAGE CODED STREAM
NON-BASE LAYER IMAGE CODED STREAM
632
DECODING UNIT
633
DECODING UNIT
QP/dQP
BASE LAYER IMAGE
NON-BASE LAYER IMAGE
630

FIG. 39

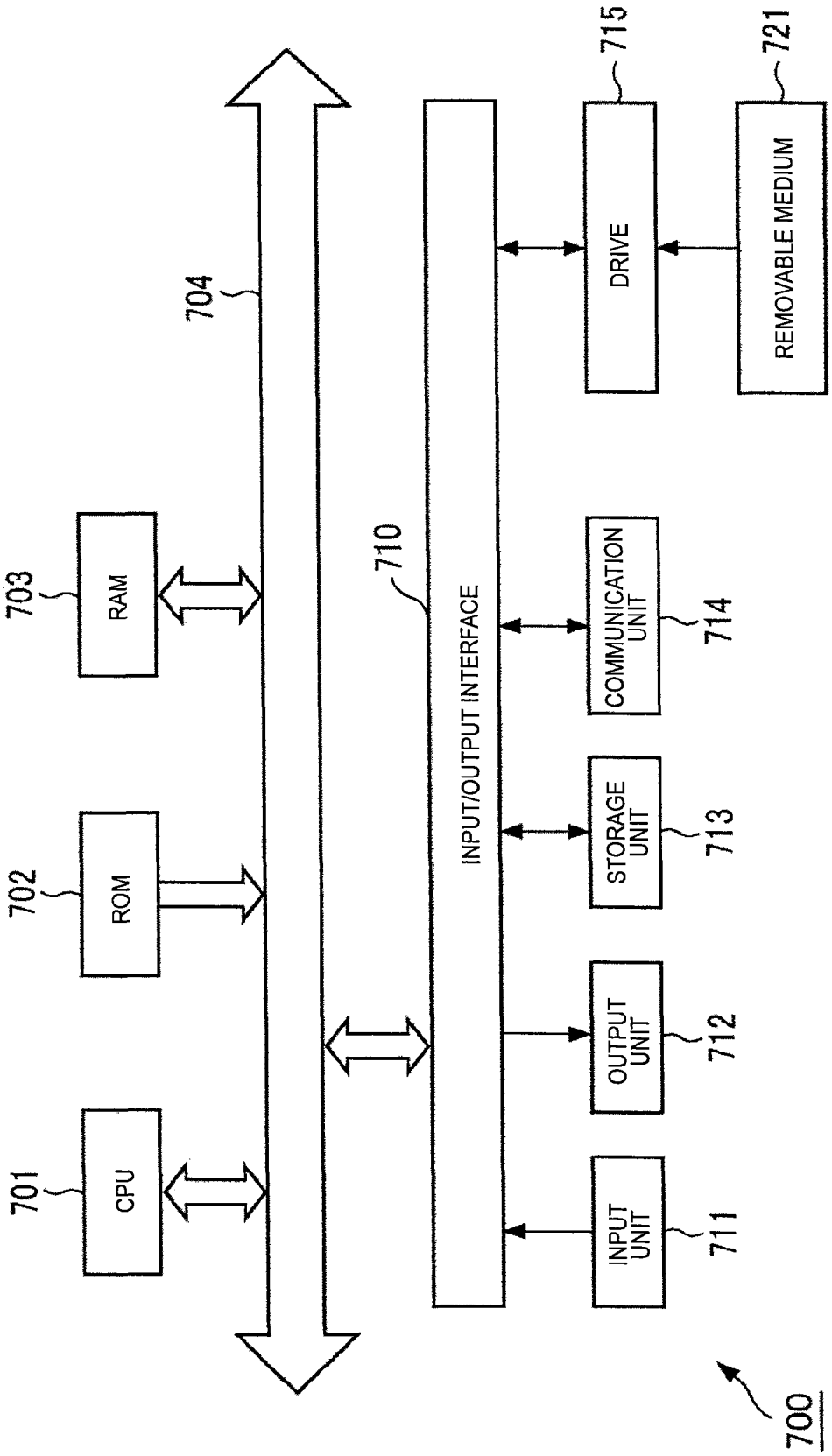

700
701
CPU
702
ROM
703
RAM
704
710
INPUT/OUTPUT INTERFACE
711
INPUT UNIT
712
OUTPUT UNIT
713
STORAGE UNIT
714
COMMUNICATION UNIT
715
DRIVE
721
REMOVABLE MEDIUM

FIG. 40

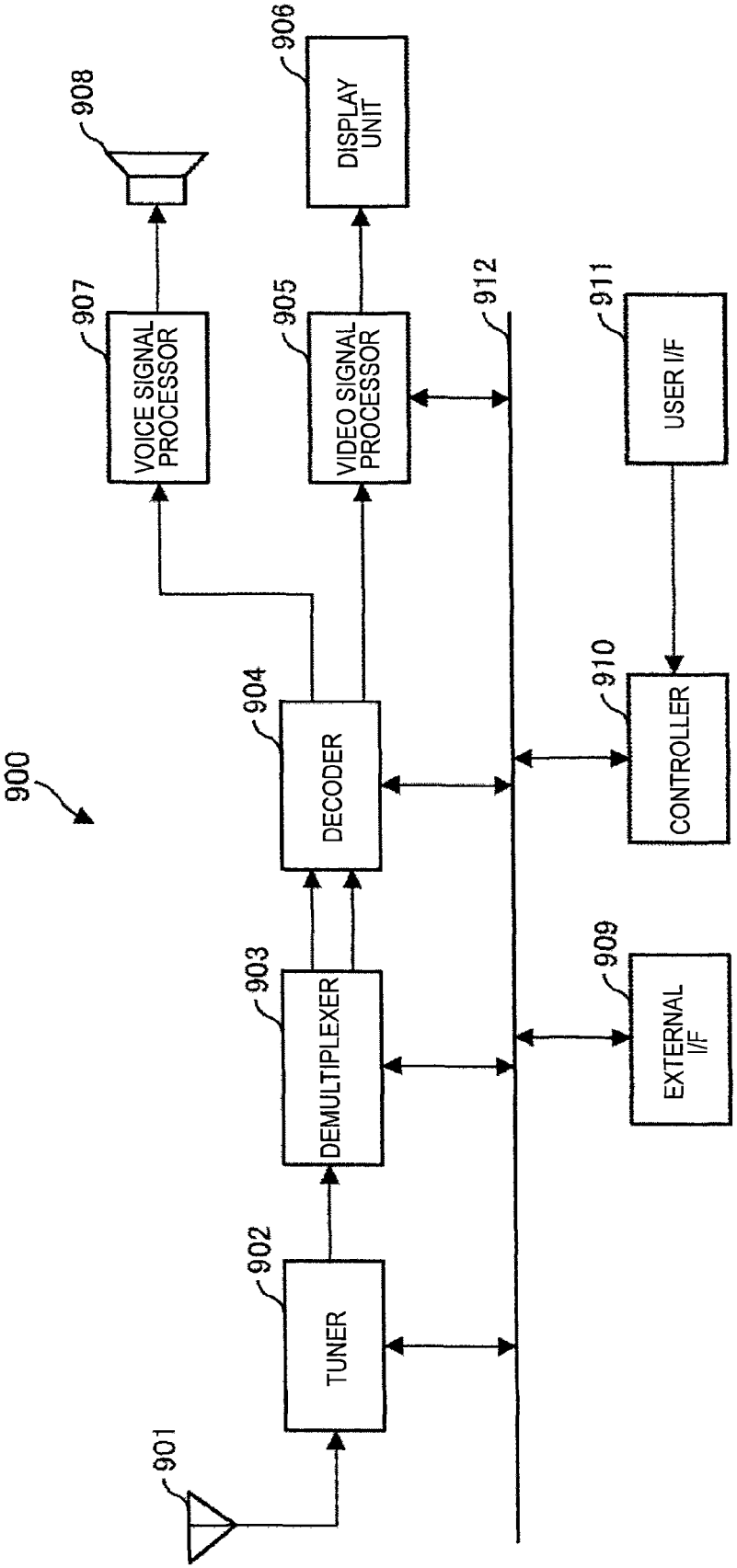

900
901
902
TUNER
903
DEMULTIPLEXER
904
DECODER
905
VIDEO SIGNAL PROCESSOR
906
DISPLAY UNIT
907
VOICE SIGNAL PROCESSOR
908
909
EXTERNAL I/F
910
CONTROLLER
911
USER I/F
912

FIG. 41

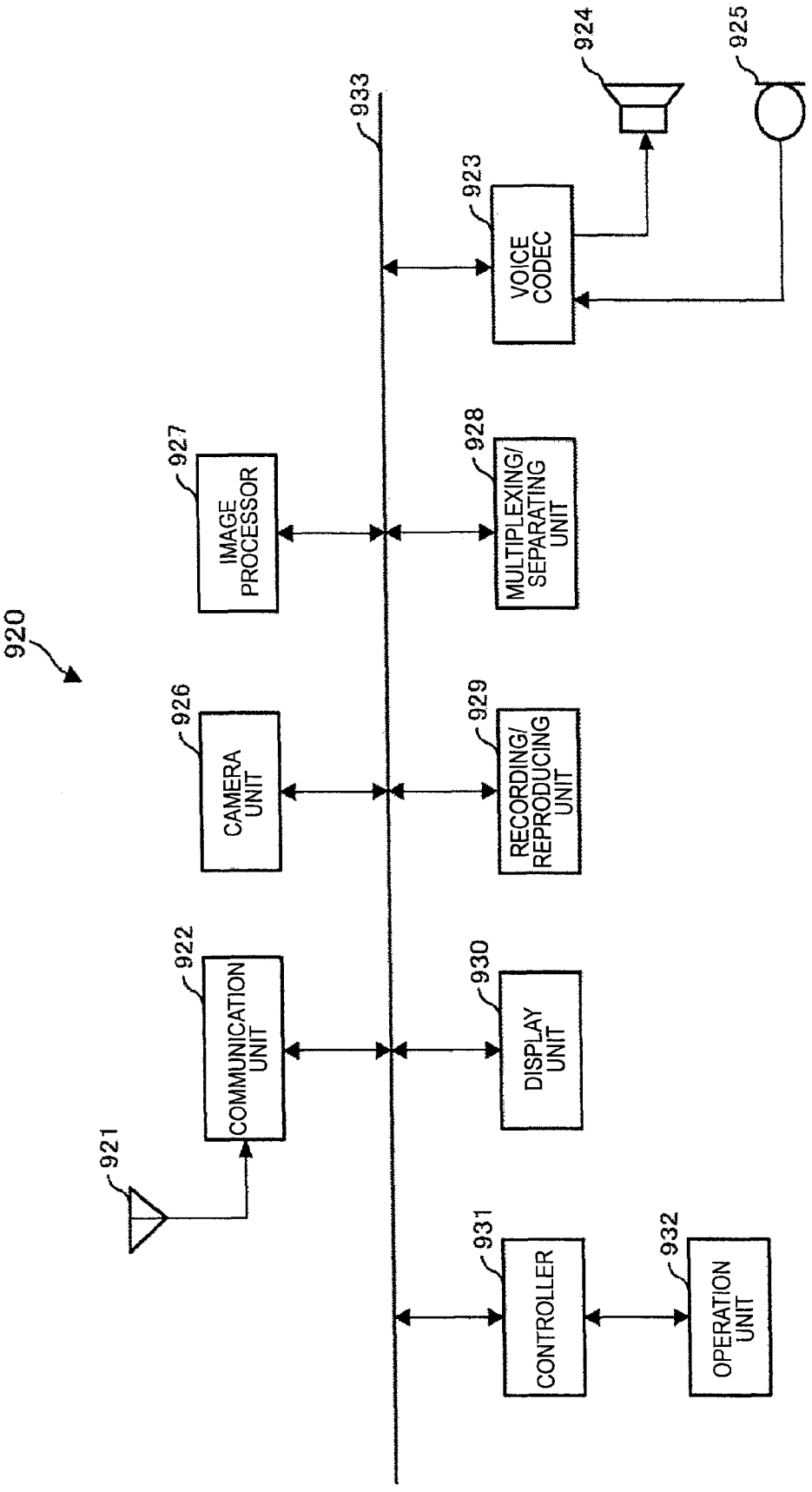

920
921
922
COMMUNICATION UNIT
923
VOICE CODEC
924
925
926
CAMERA UNIT
927
IMAGE PROCESSOR
928
MULTIPLEXING/ SEPARATING UNIT
929
RECORDING/ REPRODUCING UNIT
930
DISPLAY UNIT
931
CONTROLLER
932
OPERATION UNIT
933

FIG. 42

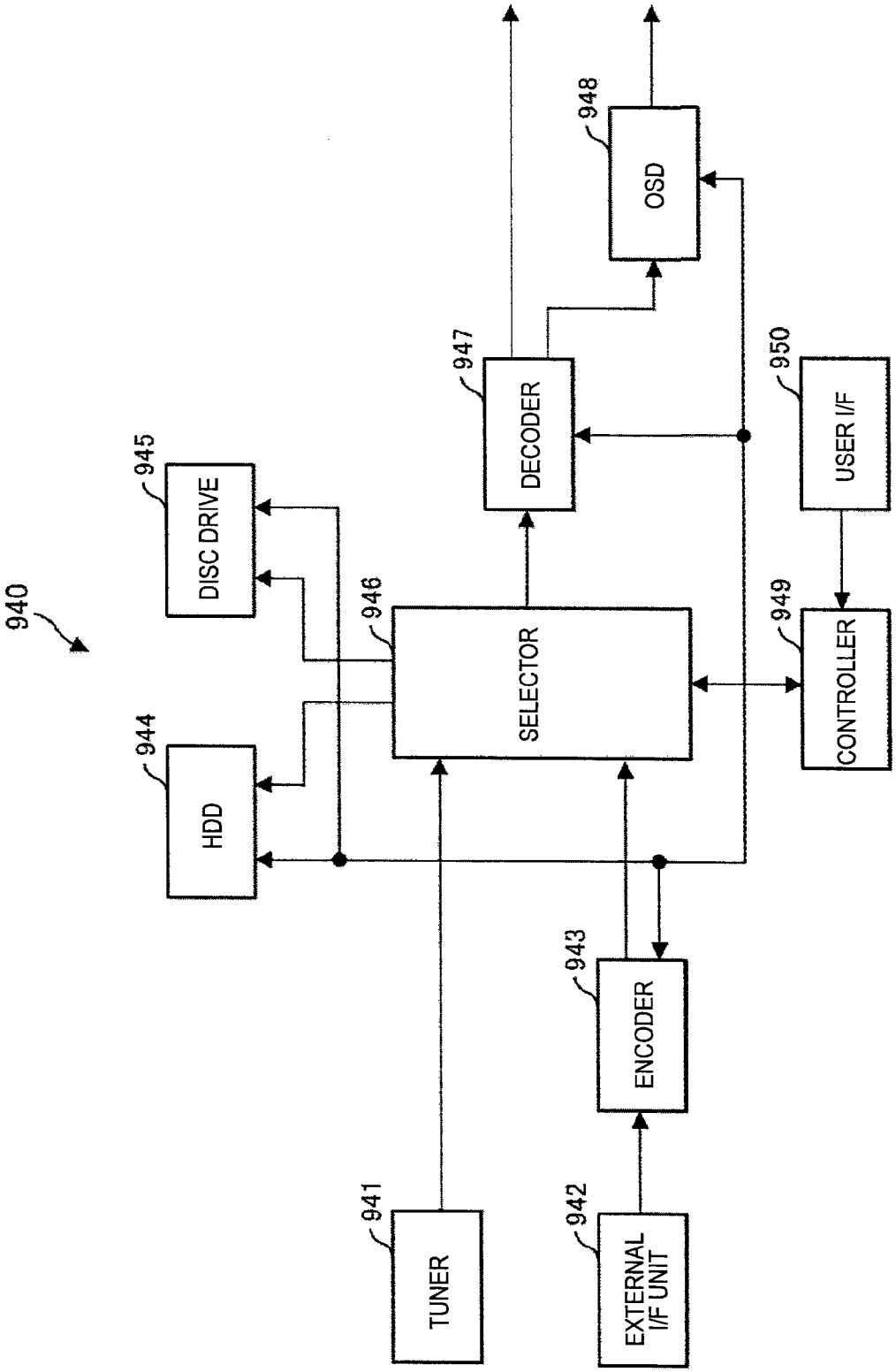

940
941
TUNER
942
EXTERNAL I/F UNIT
943
ENCODER
944
HDD
945
DISC DRIVE
946
SELECTOR
947
DECODER
948
OSD
949
CONTROLLER
950
USER I/F

FIG. 43

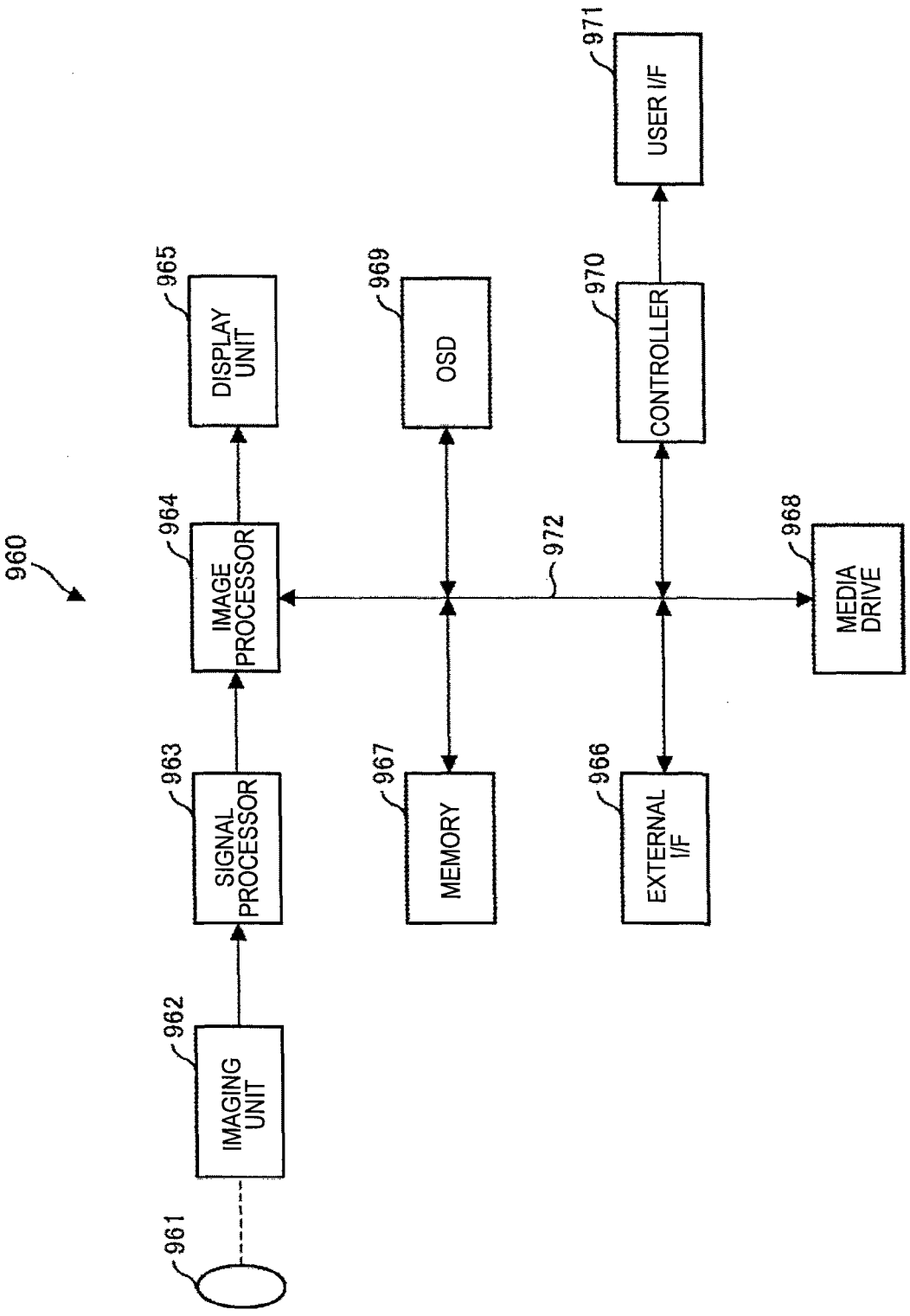

960
961
962
IMAGING UNIT
963
SIGNAL PROCESSOR
964
IMAGE PROCESSOR
965
DISPLAY UNIT
966
EXTERNAL I/F
967
MEMORY
968
MEDIA DRIVE
969
OSD
970
CONTROLLER
971
USER I/F
972

IMAGE PROCESSING APPARATUS AND METHOD

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation of U.S. Ser. No. 13/700,156 filed Nov. 27, 2012, the entire content of which is incorporated herein by reference. U.S. Ser. No. 13/700,156 is a national stage of PCT/JP11/062,797 filed Jun. 3, 2011, which claims priority under 35 U.S.C. 119 to Japanese Application Nos. 2010-129414 filed Jun. 4, 2010; 2010-222300 filed Sep. 30, 2010; 2011-053479 filed Mar. 10, 2011; and 2011-054816 filed Mar. 11, 2011.

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present technology relates to an image processing apparatus and a method and relates to an image processing apparatus and a method for performing a quantization process or an inverse quantization process.

BACKGROUND ART

Recently, an apparatus complying with a system such as MPEG (Moving Picture Experts Group), which digitally treats image information and compresses the same by an orthogonal transform such as a discrete cosine transform and motion compensation by using redundancy specific to the image information in order to efficiently transmit and accumulate the information at that time, has been widely used in both of information distribution in a broadcast station and information reception in standard home.

These days, there are growing needs for higher compression coding such as coding of an image of approximately 4096×2048 pixels, four times as many as those for a high-definition image, or distribution of the high-definition image in an environment of limited transmission capacity such as the Internet. Therefore, VCEG under ITU-T continuously studies improvement in coding efficiency.

A pixel size of a macroblock being a partial area of the image, which is a division unit (unit of coding process) of the image at the time of image coding in MPEG1, MPEG2, and ITU-T H.264/MPEG4-AVC being conventional image coding systems, is always 16×16 pixels. On the other hand, Non-Patent Document 1 suggests extending the number of pixels of the macroblock horizontally and vertically as elemental technology of next-generation image coding standard. This also suggests using the macroblock of 32×32 pixels and 64×64 pixels in addition to the pixel size of the macroblock of 16×16 pixels defined by the MPEG1, MPEG2, ITU-T H.264/MPEG4-AVC and the like. This is for improving the coding efficiency by performing the motion compensation and the orthogonal transform in a unit of larger area in areas with similar motion because it is predicted that the pixel size of the image to be coded increases horizontally and vertically in the future such as UHD (Ultra High Definition; 4000 pixels×2000 pixels), for example.

Non-Patent Document 1 adopts a hierarchical structure, thereby defining a larger block as a superset for the block not larger than 16×16 pixels while maintaining compatibility with the macroblock of current AVC.

Although Non-Patent Document 1 suggests applying the extended macroblock to inter slice, Non-Patent Document 2 suggests applying the extended macroblock to intra slice.

CITATION LIST

Non-Patent Documents

Non-Patent Document 1: Peisong Chenn, Yan Ye, Marta Karczewicz, "Video Coding Using Extended Block Sizes", COM16-C123-E, Qualcomm Inc

Non-Patent Document 2: Sung-Chang Lim, Hahyun Lee, Jinho Lee, Jongho Kim, Haechul Choi, Seyoon Jeong, Jin Soo Choi, "Intra coding using extended block size", VCEG-AL28, July, 2009

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Problems to be Solved by the Invention

When the extended macroblock as suggested in Non-Patent Documents 1 and 2 is applied, possibility that a flat area and an area including texture are mixed in a single macroblock becomes high.

However, since only one quantization parameter may be specified for one macroblock in Non-Patent Documents 1 and 2, it is difficult to perform adaptive quantization according to characteristics of the respective areas in a plane.

The present technology has been realized in view of such circumstances and an object thereof is to inhibit subjective image quality of a decoded image from deteriorating by performing a more appropriate quantization process.

Solution to Problems

An aspect of the present technology is an image processing apparatus, including: a decoding unit which decodes a coded stream to generate quantized data; a setting unit which sets a quantization parameter used when the quantized data generated by the decoding unit is inversely quantized for a coding unit in a layer lower than a reference coding unit in a reference layer of the coding unit being a unit of coding process when image data is coded; and an inverse quantization unit which inversely quantizes the quantized data generated by the decoding unit by using the quantization parameter set by the setting unit.

The setting unit may set the quantization parameter for a current coding unit by using a difference quantization parameter indicating a difference value between the quantization parameter set for the current coding unit being a target of an inverse quantization process and the quantization parameter set for the coding unit in the same layer as the current coding unit.

The difference quantization parameter may be the difference value between the quantization parameter set for the current coding unit and the quantization parameter set for the coding unit decoded before the current coding unit in order of decoding process.

The difference quantization parameter may be the difference value between the quantization parameter set for the current coding unit and the quantization parameter set for the coding unit decoded immediately before the current coding unit in the order of decoding process.

The reference coding unit may be a largest coding unit being the coding unit in a highest layer.

The image processing apparatus may further include: a receiving unit which receives the coded stream and minimum coding unit size data indicating a minimum size of the coding unit for which the difference quantization parameter is set, and the setting unit may set the quantization parameter for the

current coding unit according to the minimum coding unit size data received by the receiving unit.

The receiving unit may obtain the minimum coding unit size data from a slice header of the coded stream.

When a size indicated by the minimum coding unit size data is 16 pixels, the difference quantization parameter for the coding unit of which size is smaller than 16 pixels may be set to 0.

The setting unit may set the quantization parameter for a current coding unit by using a difference quantization parameter indicating a difference value between the quantization parameter set for the current coding unit being a target of a decoding process and the quantization parameter set for a slice to which the current coding unit belongs.

The setting unit may set the quantization parameter for the current coding unit by using the difference quantization parameter indicating the difference value between the quantization parameter set for the current coding unit and the quantization parameter set for the slice to which the current coding unit belongs when the current coding unit is a first coding unit in order of decoding process in a layer of the reference coding unit.

The reference coding unit may be a largest coding unit being the coding unit in a highest layer.

The image processing apparatus may further include: a receiving unit which receives the coded stream and minimum coding unit size data indicating a minimum size of the coding unit for which the difference quantization parameter is set, and the setting unit may set the quantization parameter for the current coding unit according to the minimum coding unit size data received by the receiving unit.

The receiving unit may obtain the minimum coding unit size data from a slice header of the coded stream.

The difference quantization parameter for the coding unit of which size is smaller than 16 pixels may be set to 0 when a size indicated by the minimum coding unit size data is 16 pixels.

The setting unit may set the quantization parameter set for the reference coding unit as the quantization parameter set for the coding unit in a layer lower than the reference coding unit when a value of the difference quantization parameter is 0 for the coding unit in the layer lower than the reference coding unit.

The image processing apparatus may further include: a receiving unit which receives difference identification data for identifying whether the value of the difference quantization parameter is 0 for the coding unit in the layer lower than the reference coding unit, and the setting unit may set the quantization parameter set for the reference coding unit as the quantization parameter set for the coding unit in the layer lower than the reference coding unit by using the difference identification data received by the receiving unit.

An aspect of the present technology is an image processing method, including: generating quantized data by decoding a coded stream; setting a quantization parameter used when the generated quantized data is inversely quantized for a coding unit in a layer lower than a reference coding unit in a reference layer of the coding unit being a unit of coding process when image data is coded; and inversely quantizing the generated quantized data by using the set quantization parameter.

Another aspect of the present technology is an image processing apparatus, including: a setting unit which sets a quantization parameter used when image data is quantized for a coding unit in a layer lower than a reference coding unit in a reference layer of the coding unit being a unit of coding process when the image data is coded; a quantization unit which generates quantized data by quantizing the image data by using the quantization parameter set by the setting unit; and a coding unit which codes the quantized data generated by the quantization unit to generate a coded stream.

The setting unit may set a difference quantization parameter indicating a difference value between the quantization parameter set for a current coding unit being a target of a coding process and the quantization parameter set for the coding unit in the same layer as the current coding unit, and the image processing apparatus may further include: a transmitting unit which transmits the difference quantization parameter set by the setting unit and the coded stream generated by the coding unit.

The setting unit may set, as the difference quantization parameter, the difference value between the quantization parameter set for the current coding unit and the quantization parameter set for the coding unit coded before the current coding unit in order of coding process.

The setting unit may set, as the difference quantization parameter, the difference value between the quantization parameter set for the current coding unit and the quantization parameter set for the coding unit coded immediately before the current coding unit in the order of coding process.

The reference coding unit may be a largest coding unit being the coding unit in a highest layer.

The setting unit may set minimum coding unit size data indicating a minimum size of the coding unit for which the difference quantization parameter is set, and the transmitting unit may transmit the minimum coding unit size data set by the setting unit.

The transmitting unit may add, as a slice header, the minimum coding unit size data set by the setting unit to syntax of the coded stream generated by the coding unit.

The setting unit may set the difference quantization parameter for the coding unit of which size is smaller than 16 pixels to 0 when a size indicated by the minimum coding unit size data is set to 16 pixels.

The setting unit may set a difference quantization parameter indicating a difference value between the quantization parameter set for a current coding unit being a target of a coding process and the quantization parameter set for a slice to which the current coding unit belongs, and the image processing apparatus may further include: a transmitting unit which transmits the difference quantization parameter set by the setting unit and the coded stream generated by the coding unit.

The setting unit may set, as the difference quantization parameter, the difference value between the quantization parameter set for the current coding unit and the quantization parameter set for the slice to which the current coding unit belongs when the current coding unit is a first coding unit in order of coding process in a layer of the reference coding unit.

The reference coding unit may be a largest coding unit being the coding unit in a highest layer.

The setting unit may set minimum coding unit size data indicating a minimum size of the coding unit for which the difference quantization parameter is set, and the transmitting unit may transmit the minimum coding unit size data set by the setting unit.

The transmitting unit may add, as a slice header, the minimum coding unit size data set by the setting unit to syntax of the coded stream generated by the coding unit.

The setting unit may set the difference quantization parameter for the coding unit of which size is smaller than 16 pixels to 0 when a size indicated by the minimum coding unit size data is set to 16 pixels.

The setting unit may set the quantization parameter set for the reference coding unit as the quantization parameter set for

the coding unit in the layer lower than the reference coding unit when a value of the difference quantization parameter is set to 0 for the coding unit in the layer lower than the reference coding unit.

The setting unit may set difference identification data for identifying whether the value of the difference quantization parameter is 0 for the coding unit in the layer lower than the reference coding unit, and the image processing apparatus may further include: a transmitting unit which transmits the difference identification data set by the setting unit and the coded stream generated by the coding unit.

Another aspect of the present technology is an image processing method, including: setting a quantization parameter used when image data is quantized for a coding unit in a layer lower than a reference coding unit in a reference layer of the coding unit being a unit of coding process when the image data is coded; generating quantized data by quantizing the image data by using the set quantization parameter; and generating a coded stream by coding the generated quantized data.

In an aspect of the present technology, the coded stream is decoded and the quantized data is generated, the quantization parameter used when the generated quantized data is inversely quantized is set for the coding unit in the layer lower than the reference coding unit in the reference layer of the coding unit being the unit of coding process when the image data is coded, and the generated quantized data is inversely quantized by using the set quantization parameter.

In another aspect of the present technology, the quantization parameter used when the image data is quantized is set for the coding unit in the layer lower than the reference coding unit in the reference layer of the coding unit being the unit of coding process when the image data is coded, the image data is quantized and the quantized data is generated by using the set quantization parameter, and the generated quantized data is coded and the coded stream is generated.

Effects of the Invention

According to the present technology, the quantization process or the inverse quantization process may be performed more appropriately.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

FIG. **1** is a block diagram illustrating a principal configuration example of an image coding apparatus to which the present technology is applied.

FIG. **2** is a view illustrating an example of correspondence relationship between a quantization parameter for a luminance signal and a quantization parameter for a chrominance signal.

FIG. **3** is a view illustrating an example of a macroblock.

FIG. **4** is a view illustrating another example of the macroblock.

FIG. **5** is a block diagram illustrating a detailed configuration example of a quantization unit.

FIG. **6** is a view illustrating an example of an image in a unit of macroblock.

FIG. **7** is a flowchart illustrating an example of a flow of a coding process.

FIG. **8** is a flowchart illustrating an example of a flow of a quantization parameter calculation process.

FIG. **9** is a block diagram illustrating a principal configuration example of an image decoding apparatus to which the present technology is applied.

FIG. **10** is a block diagram illustrating a detailed configuration example of an inverse quantization unit.

FIG. **11** is a flowchart illustrating an example of a flow of a decoding process.

FIG. **12** is a flowchart illustrating an example of a flow of an inverse quantization process.

FIG. **13** is a flowchart illustrating another example of the flow of the quantization parameter calculation process.

FIG. **14** is a flowchart illustrating another example of the flow of the inverse quantization process.

FIG. **15** is a view illustrating a configuration example of a coding unit.

FIG. **16** is a view illustrating an example of the quantization parameter assigned to each coding unit.

FIG. **17** is a view illustrating an example of syntax.

FIG. **18** is a block diagram illustrating another configuration example of the image coding apparatus to which the present technology is applied.

FIG. **19** is a block diagram illustrating a detailed configuration example of a coding unit quantization unit and a rate controller.

FIG. **20** is a flowchart illustrating still another example of the flow of the quantization parameter calculation process.

FIG. **21** is a block diagram illustrating another configuration example of the image decoding apparatus to which the present technology is applied.

FIG. **22** is a block diagram illustrating a detailed configuration example of a coding unit inverse quantization unit.

FIG. **23** is a flowchart illustrating still another example of the flow of the inverse quantization process.

FIG. **24** is a view comparing characteristics of methods of calculating a quantization parameter dQP.

FIG. **25** is a view illustrating an example of the quantization parameter assigned to each coding unit.

FIG. **26** is a view illustrating an example of the syntax of a slice header.

FIG. **27** is a view illustrating an example of a method of calculating activity.

FIG. **28** is a view illustrating a relationship between the quantization parameter and a quantization scale.

FIG. **29** is a block diagram illustrating still another configuration example of the image coding apparatus to which the present technology is applied.

FIG. **30** is a block diagram illustrating a detailed configuration example of the coding unit quantization unit, the quantization unit, and the rate controller.

FIG. **31** is a flowchart illustrating another example of the flow of the coding process.

FIG. **32** is a flowchart illustrating an example of a flow of a quantization process.

FIG. **33** is a view illustrating an example of a multi-view image coding system.

FIG. **34** is a view illustrating a principal configuration example of the multi-view image coding apparatus to which the present technology is applied.

FIG. **35** is a view illustrating a principal configuration example of a multi-view image decoding apparatus to which the present technology is applied.

FIG. **36** is a view illustrating an example of a hierarchical image coding system.

FIG. **37** is a view illustrating a principal configuration example of a hierarchical image coding apparatus to which the present technology is applied.

FIG. **38** is a view illustrating a principal configuration example of a hierarchical image decoding apparatus to which the present technology is applied.

FIG. **39** is a block diagram illustrating a principal configuration example of a computer to which the present technology is applied.

FIG. **40** is a block diagram illustrating a principal configuration example of a television apparatus to which the present technology is applied.

FIG. **41** is a block diagram illustrating a principal configuration example of a mobile terminal to which the present technology is applied.

FIG. **42** is a block diagram illustrating a principal configuration example of a recording/reproducing apparatus to which the present technology is applied.

FIG. **43** is a block diagram illustrating a principal configuration example of an imaging apparatus to which the present technology is applied.

MODE FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

Modes for carrying out the present technology (hereinafter, referred to as embodiments) are hereinafter described. Note that the description is given in the following order.

1. First Embodiment (Image Coding Apparatus)
2. Second Embodiment (Image Decoding Apparatus)
3. Third Embodiment (Image Coding Apparatus/Image Decoding Apparatus)
4. Fourth Embodiment (Image Coding Apparatus/Image Decoding Apparatus)
5. Fifth Embodiment (Image Coding Apparatus)
6. Sixth Embodiment (Multi-View Image Coding/Multi-View Image Decoding Apparatuses)
7. Seventh Embodiment (Hierarchical Image Coding/Hierarchical Image Decoding Apparatuses)
8. Eighth Embodiment (Application)

1. First Embodiment

[Image Coding Apparatus]

FIG. **1** illustrates a configuration of one embodiment of an image coding apparatus as an image processing apparatus to which the present technology is applied.

An image coding apparatus **100** illustrated in FIG. **1** is a coding apparatus, which codes an image in a manner similar to H.264/MPEG (Moving Picture Experts Group)-4 Part 10 (AVC (Advanced Video Coding)) (hereinafter, referred to as H.264/AVC) system, for example. However, the image coding apparatus **100** specifies a quantization parameter for each sub macroblock.

A macroblock is a partial area of the image, which is a unit of process when the image is coded. The sub macroblock is a small area obtained by dividing the macroblock into a plurality of parts.

In an example in FIG. **1**, the image coding apparatus **100** includes an A/D (Analog/Digital) converter **101**, a screen reorder buffer **102**, an arithmetic unit **103**, an orthogonal transformation unit **104**, a quantization unit **105**, a lossless coding unit **106**, and an accumulation buffer **107**. The image coding apparatus **100** also includes an inverse quantization unit **108**, an inverse orthogonal transformation unit **109**, an arithmetic unit **110**, a deblocking filter **111**, a frame memory **112**, a selector **113**, an intra prediction unit **114**, a motion prediction/compensation unit **115**, a selector **116**, and a rate controller **117**.

The image coding apparatus **100** further includes a sub macroblock quantization unit **121** and a sub macroblock inverse quantization unit **122**.

The A/D converter **101** A/D converts input image data and outputs the same to the screen reorder buffer **102** for storage.

The screen reorder buffer **102** reorders the stored image with frames in order of display into order of frames for coding according to a GOP (Group of Picture) structure. The screen reorder buffer **102** supplies the image, in which order of the frames has been reordered, to the arithmetic unit **103**. The screen reorder buffer **102** supplies the image, in which order of the frames has been reordered, also to the intra prediction unit **114** and the motion prediction/compensation unit **115**.

The arithmetic unit **103** subtracts a predicted image supplied from the intra prediction unit **114** or the motion prediction/compensation unit **115** through the selector **116** from the image read from the screen reorder buffer **102** and outputs difference information to the orthogonal transformation unit **104**.

For example, in a case of the image to which intra coding is performed, the arithmetic unit **103** subtracts, from the image read from the screen reorder buffer **102**, the predicted image supplied from the intra prediction unit **114**. Also, in a case of the image to which inter coding is performed, for example, the arithmetic unit **103** subtracts, from the image read from the screen reorder buffer **102**, the predicted image supplied from the motion prediction/compensation unit **115**.

The orthogonal transformation unit **104** performs an orthogonal transform such as a discrete cosine transform and a Karhunen-Loeve transform to the difference information supplied from the arithmetic unit **103** and supplies a transform coefficient to the quantization unit **105**.

The quantization unit **105** quantizes the transform coefficient output from the orthogonal transformation unit **104**. The quantization unit **105** sets the quantization parameter for each sub macroblock, which is an area smaller than the macroblock, in cooperation with the sub macroblock quantization unit **121** based on information supplied from the rate controller **117** and performs quantization. The quantization unit **105** supplies the quantized transform coefficient to the lossless coding unit **106**.

The lossless coding unit **106** performs lossless coding such as variable-length coding and arithmetic coding to the quantized transform coefficient.

The lossless coding unit **106** obtains information indicating intra prediction and the like from the intra prediction unit **114** and obtains information indicating an inter prediction mode, motion vector information and the like from the motion prediction/compensation unit **115**. Meanwhile, the information indicating the intra prediction (intra prediction) is hereinafter also referred to as intra prediction mode information. Also, information indicating an information mode indicating inter prediction (inter prediction) is hereinafter also referred to as inter prediction mode information.

The lossless coding unit **106** codes the quantized transform coefficient and makes various pieces of information such as a filter coefficient, the intra prediction mode information, the inter prediction mode information, and the quantization parameter a part of header information of coded data (multiplexes). The lossless coding unit **106** supplies the coded data obtained by the coding to the accumulation buffer **107** for accumulation.

For example, the lossless coding unit **106** performs a lossless coding process such as the variable-length coding or the arithmetic coding. The variable-length coding includes CAVLC (Context-Adaptive Variable Length Coding) defined by the H.264/AVC system and the like. The arithmetic coding includes CABAC (Context-Adaptive Binary Arithmetic Coding) and the like.

The accumulation buffer **107** temporarily holds the coded data supplied from the lossless coding unit **106** and outputs the same as a coded image coded by the H.264/AVC system to

subsequent recording apparatus and transmission channel not illustrated, for example, at a predetermined timing.

The transform coefficient quantized by the quantization unit **105** is also supplied to the inverse quantization unit **108**. The inverse quantization unit **108** inversely quantizes the quantized transform coefficient by a method corresponding to the quantization by the quantization unit **105**. The inverse quantization unit **108** performs inverse quantization by using the quantization parameter for each sub macroblock set by the quantization unit **105** in cooperation with the sub macroblock inverse quantization unit **122**. The inverse quantization unit **108** supplies an obtained transform coefficient to the inverse orthogonal transformation unit **109**.

The inverse orthogonal transformation unit **109** inversely orthogonally transforms the supplied transform coefficient using a method corresponding to an orthogonal transform process by the orthogonal transformation unit **104**. An output obtained by inverse orthogonal transform (restored difference information) is supplied to the arithmetic unit **110**.

The arithmetic unit **110** adds the predicted image supplied from the intra prediction unit **114** or the motion prediction/compensation unit **115** through the selector **116** to a result of the inverse orthogonal transform, that is, the restored difference information supplied from the inverse orthogonal transformation unit **109** to obtain a locally decoded image (decoded image).

For example, when the difference information corresponds to the image to which the intra coding is performed, the arithmetic unit **110** adds the predicted image supplied from the intra prediction unit **114** to the difference information. Also, for example, when the difference information corresponds to the image to which the inter coding is performed, the arithmetic unit **110** adds the predicted image supplied from the motion prediction/compensation unit **115** to the difference information.

An addition result is supplied to the deblocking filter **111** or the frame memory **112**.

The deblocking filter **111** removes block distortion of the decoded image by appropriately performing a deblocking filter process and improves image quality by appropriately performing a loop filter process by using a Wiener filter, for example. The deblocking filter **111** classifies each pixel and performs an appropriate filter process for each class. The deblocking filter **111** supplies a result of the filter process to the frame memory **112**.

The frame memory **112** outputs an accumulated reference image to the intra prediction unit **114** or the motion prediction/compensation unit **115** through the selector **113** at a predetermined timing.

For example, in the case of the image to which the intra coding is performed, the frame memory **112** supplies the reference image to the intra prediction unit **114** through the selector **113**. Also, for example, when the inter coding is performed, the frame memory **112** supplies the reference image to the motion prediction/compensation unit **115** through the selector **113**.

When the reference image supplied from the frame memory **112** is the image to which the intra coding is performed, the selector **113** supplies the reference image to the intra prediction unit **114**. Also, when the reference image supplied from the frame memory **112** is the image to which the inter coding is performed, the selector **113** supplies the reference image to the motion prediction/compensation unit **115**.

The intra prediction unit **114** performs the intra prediction (intra prediction) to generate the predicted image by using a pixel value in a screen. The intra prediction unit **114** performs the intra prediction in a plurality of modes (intra prediction modes).

The intra prediction unit **114** generates the predicted image in all of the intra prediction modes and evaluates each predicted image to select an optimal mode. Upon selecting the optimal intra prediction mode, the intra prediction unit **114** supplies the predicted image generated in the optimal mode to the arithmetic unit **103** and the arithmetic unit **110** through the selector **116**.

Also, as described above, the intra prediction unit **114** appropriately supplies, to the lossless coding unit **106**, the information such as the intra prediction mode information indicating an adopted intra prediction mode.

The motion prediction/compensation unit **115** performs motion prediction by using the input image supplied from the screen reorder buffer **102** and the reference image supplied from the frame memory **112** through the selector **113**, performs a motion compensation process according to a detected motion vector and generates the predicted image (inter prediction image information) for the image to which the inter coding is performed.

The motion prediction/compensation unit **115** performs an inter prediction process in all of candidate inter prediction modes to generate the predicted image. The motion prediction/compensation unit **115** supplies the generated predicted image to the arithmetic unit **103** and the arithmetic unit **110** through the selector **116**.

Also, the motion prediction/compensation unit **115** supplies the inter prediction mode information indicating an adopted inter prediction mode and motion vector information indicating a calculated motion vector to the lossless coding unit **106**.

In the case of the image to which the intra coding is performed, the selector **116** supplies an output of the intra prediction unit **114** to the arithmetic unit **103** and the arithmetic unit **110**, and in the case of the image to which the inter coding is performed, the selector **116** supplies an output of the motion prediction/compensation unit **115** to the arithmetic unit **103** and the arithmetic unit **110**.

The rate controller **117** controls a rate of quantization operation of the quantization unit **105** such that overflow or underflow does not occur based on a compressed image accumulated in the accumulation buffer **107**. The rate controller **117** supplies information indicating complexity of the image to the quantization unit **105** for each sub macroblock, which is the small area obtained by dividing the macroblock into a plurality of parts.

For example, the rate controller **117** provides activity, which is information indicating dispersion of the pixel values, to the quantization unit **105** as the information indicating the complexity of the image. It goes without saying that the information indicating the complexity of the image may be any information.

The sub macroblock quantization unit **121** obtains the information indicating the complexity of the image for each sub macroblock from the quantization unit **105**, sets a quantization value (quantization step) for each sub macroblock based on the information, and returns the value to the quantization unit **105**.

The sub macroblock inverse quantization unit **122** obtains the quantization parameter from the inverse quantization unit **108**, obtains the quantization value for each sub macroblock by using the value of the parameter, and returns the same to the inverse quantization unit **108**.

[Quantization of AVC]

Herein, the quantization defined by the AVC (Advanced Video Coding) is described as an example of a conventional quantization process.

Although an integer transform matrix [H] defined by the AVC does not satisfy a requirement of an orthogonal transform matrix represented by a following equation (1), the orthogonal transform process is performed by performing different quantization processes to respective components after integer transform and combining the integer transform and the quantization.

$$[H][H]^T=[I] \tag{1}$$

In the AVC, it is possible to define a quantization parameter QP, which may have values from "0" to "51", for each macroblock in order to perform the quantization.

For example, suppose that A(QP) and B(QP) have values, which satisfy a following equation (2), regardless of the value of the QP.

$$A(\mathrm{QP})*B(\mathrm{QP})=2m+n \tag{2}$$

The orthogonal transform and the inverse orthogonal transform in the AVC may be realized by operation represented by following equations (3) and (4).

$$d=c*A(\mathrm{QP})/2^m \tag{3}$$

$$c'=d*B(\mathrm{QP})/2^n \tag{4}$$

Meanwhile, c represents an orthogonal transform coefficient before the quantization, d represents the orthogonal transform coefficient after the quantization, and c' represents the orthogonal transform coefficient after the inverse quantization.

By performing such a process, it is possible to realize the quantization and inverse quantization processes not by division but only by shift operation in the AVC.

Meanwhile, values of A and B differ depending on components.

The quantization parameter QP is designed such that the quantization process twice as coarse as the original one is performed when the value thereof increments by 6 such as from 6 to 12, for example.

Especially, deterioration in a chrominance signal is easily noticeable at a lower bit rate, that is, with a higher QP. Therefore, a default quantization parameter QP_C for the chrominance signal is defined with respect to a quantization parameter QP_Y for a luminance signal as indicated in a table in FIG. **2**.

A user may control this relationship by setting information about ChromaQPOffset included in image compressed information.

Also, in a profile not lower than a High Profile, it is possible to independently set the quantization parameter for a Cb/Cr component by using ChromaQPOffset and 2ndChromaQPOffset.

[Quantization Parameter Calculation]

In the AVC coding system and coding systems disclosed in Non-Patent Documents 1 and 2, a quantization parameter MB_QP for each macroblock is calculated in the following manner.

That is, $\mathrm{QpBdOffset}_Y$ is first calculated from bit_depth_luma_minus8 in a sequence parameter set as represented by a following equation (5).

$$QpBd\mathrm{Offset}_Y=6*\mathrm{bit_depth_luma_minus8} \tag{5}$$

Next, an initial value of the quantization parameter in each picture is specified by pic_init_qp_minus26 in a picture parameter set.

Next, by slice_qp_delta defined in a slice layer, a quantization parameter $\mathrm{SliceQP}_Y$ in the slice is calculated as represented by a following equation (6).

$$\mathrm{SliceQP}_Y=26+\mathrm{pic_init_qp_minus26}+\mathrm{slice_qp_delta} \tag{6}$$

Finally, by using mb_qp_delta in a macroblock layer, the quantization parameter MB_QP for each macroblock is calculated as represented by a following equation (7).

$$\mathrm{MB_QP}=((\mathrm{MB_QP}_{Prev}+\mathrm{mb_qp_delta}+52+2*QpBd\mathrm{Offset}_Y)\%(52+QpBd\mathrm{Offset}_Y))-QpBd\mathrm{Offset}_Y \tag{7}$$

Herein, $\mathrm{MB_QP}_{Prev}$ represents the quantization parameter for a previous macroblock.

In the present technology, in addition to this, information about submb_qp_delta is further included in a sub macroblock layer in image compression.

By using this information, the quantization parameter SubMB_QP for each sub macroblock is calculated as represented by a following equation (8).

$$\mathrm{SubMB_QP}=\mathrm{Clip}(0,51,\mathrm{MB_QP}+\mathrm{submb_qp_delta}) \tag{8}$$

Herein, Clip(min,max,value) represents a function having a return value as represented by a following equation (9).

[Equation 1]

$$\mathrm{Clip}(\mathrm{min},\mathrm{max},\mathrm{value})=\mathrm{min},\ \mathrm{if}(\mathrm{value}<\mathrm{min})\ \mathrm{max},\ \mathrm{if}(\mathrm{value}>\mathrm{max})\ \mathrm{value},\ \mathrm{otherwise} \tag{9}$$

That is, the quantization parameter SubMB_QP for each sub macroblock is calculated as represented by a following equation (10). Herein, a minimum quantization parameter defined in advance is minQP and a maximum quantization parameter defined in advance is maxQP.

[Equation 2]

$$\mathrm{SUBMB_QP}=\mathrm{Clip}(\mathrm{minQP},\mathrm{maxQP},\mathrm{MB_QP}+\mathrm{submb_qp_delta}) \tag{10}$$

Meanwhile, when there is no submb_qp_delta in the image compressed information, a value thereof is set to "0" and the quantization parameter for the macroblock is also applied to the sub macroblock.

[Quantization Unit]

FIG. **5** is a block diagram illustrating a detailed configuration example of the quantization unit **105** in FIG. **1**. As illustrated in FIG. **5**, the quantization unit **105** includes a sub macroblock activity buffer **151**, a quantization parameter calculation unit **152**, and a quantization processor **153**.

The sub macroblock activity buffer **151** holds the activity supplied from the rate controller **117**. Although adaptive quantization based on the activity as defined in a MPEG-2 Test Model is performed in the AVC coding system, the rate controller **117** calculates the activity (also referred to as sub macroblock activity) for each sub macroblock. A method of calculating the sub macroblock activity is similar to that in a conventional case where the activity is calculated for each macroblock.

The sub macroblock activity buffer **151** holds the sub macroblock activity supplied from the rate controller **117** and supplies the held sub macroblock activity to the sub macroblock quantization unit **121** for each predetermined amount (for example, an amount of one screen).

The sub macroblock quantization unit **121** calculates the quantization value for each sub macroblock by using the sub macroblock activity supplied from the sub macroblock activity buffer **151**. The quantization value for each sub macroblock may be calculated by a method similar to that in a case where the quantization value for each macroblock is calculated from the activity for each macroblock.

After obtaining the quantization value for each sub macroblock, the sub macroblock quantization unit **121** supplies the quantization value for each sub macroblock to the quantization parameter calculation unit **152**.

The quantization parameter calculation unit **152** calculates various quantization parameters by using the quantization value for each sub macroblock supplied from the sub macroblock quantization unit **121**.

For example, the quantization parameter calculation unit **152** calculates the quantization parameters such as pic_init_qp_minus26, slice_qp_delta, and mb_qp_delta. The quantization parameter calculation unit **152** may obtain the quantization value for each macroblock from the quantization value for each sub macroblock. Therefore, the quantization parameter calculation unit **152** calculates the various quantization parameters to set as in a case of the conventional AVC coding system.

The quantization parameter calculation unit **152** further obtains the quantization parameter submb_qp_delta indicating difference between the quantization parameter MB_QP for each macroblock and the quantization parameter SubMB_QP for each sub macroblock. It is required to transmit the quantization parameter for each sub macroblock to a decoding side. It becomes possible to decrease a code amount of the quantization parameter for each sub macroblock by obtaining a difference value in this manner. So to speak, the quantization parameter submb_qp_delta is a transmission format of the quantization parameter SubMB_QP. The quantization parameter SubMB_QP for each sub macroblock may be obtained by transforming the quantization value for each sub macroblock. Similarly, the quantization parameter MB_QP for each macroblock is obtained by transforming the quantization value for each macroblock. The quantization parameter calculation unit **152** calculates submb_qp_delta for each sub macroblock by using the above-described equation (35), for example.

The quantization parameter calculation unit **152** supplies the quantization value for each sub macroblock to the quantization processor **153**. Also, the quantization parameter calculation unit **152** supplies calculated various quantization parameters (specifically, pic_init_qp_minus26, slice_qp_delta, mb_qp_delta and the like) to the lossless coding unit **106** and transmits the same together with a coded stream obtained by coding the image. Meanwhile, as described above, when the value of submb_qp_delta is "0", transmission of submb_qp_delta is omitted. That is, in this case, the quantization parameter other than submb_qp_delta is supplied to the lossless coding unit **106**.

Further, the quantization parameter calculation unit **152** supplies the quantization value for each sub macroblock also to the inverse quantization unit **108**.

The quantization processor **153** quantizes the orthogonal transform coefficient supplied from the orthogonal transformation unit **104** by using the quantization value for each sub macroblock.

The quantization processor **153** supplies a quantized orthogonal transform coefficient to the lossless coding unit **106** and the inverse quantization unit **108**.

Meanwhile, the inverse quantization unit **108** inversely quantizes the orthogonal transform coefficient quantized by the above-described quantization unit **105** by using the sub macroblock inverse quantization unit **122**. In an image decoding apparatus corresponding to the image coding apparatus **100** also, a process similar to the inverse quantization process is performed, so that the inverse quantization is described in detail when the image decoding apparatus is described.

In the conventional case such as the AVC coding system, only one quantization parameter may be set for one macroblock. Therefore, in a case where a planar area and an area including texture are mixed in one macroblock, it is difficult to set the quantization parameter appropriate for both of the areas.

Especially, the larger the size of the macroblock as an extended macroblock (extended partial area) proposed in Non-Patent Document 2 and the like, the higher the possibility that the images having different characteristics are mixed in the area, so that it becomes more difficult to perform the adaptive quantization corresponding to the characteristics of each area.

On the other hand, the image coding apparatus **100** may calculate an index indicating the complexity of the image for each sub macroblock by the rate controller **117** and calculate the quantization value for each sub macroblock by the sub macroblock quantization unit **121**. That is, the quantization processor **153** may perform the quantization process by using the quantization value appropriate for each sub macroblock.

According to this, the image coding apparatus **100** may perform the quantization process more suitable for contents of the image. Especially, also in a case where the size of the macroblock is extended and both of the flat area and the area including the texture are included in a single macroblock, the image coding apparatus **100** may perform an adaptive quantization process suitable for each area to inhibit subjective image quality of the decoded image from deteriorating.

For example, in an image **160** illustrated in FIG. **6**, a macroblock **161** includes only the flat area. Therefore, even when the image coding apparatus **100** performs the quantization process by using a single quantization parameter for such macroblock **161**, there is no particular problem in image quality.

On the other hand, a macroblock **162** includes both of the flat area and a texture area. In the quantization process by using the single quantization parameter, it is not possible to perform the adaptive quantization appropriate for both of the flat area and the texture area. Therefore, if the image coding apparatus **100** performs the quantization process by using the single quantization parameter for such macroblock **161**, the subjective image quality of the decoded image might be deteriorated.

In such a case also, the image coding apparatus **100** may calculate the quantization value for each sub macroblock as described above, so that it is possible to perform a more appropriate quantization process to inhibit the subjective image quality of the decoded image from deteriorating.

Also, when a total code amount for each picture is likely to overflow in the accumulation buffer **107**, control by the quantization parameter is performed. Therefore, at that time, by allowing the quantization unit **105** to calculate the quantization value for each sub macroblock and perform the quantization as described above, the image coding apparatus **100** may control measurement against the overflow in a smaller unit.

Further, when the value of submb_qp_delta is "0", transmission of submb_qp_delta is omitted, so that it is possible to inhibit unnecessary reduction in coding efficiency. When the value of submb_qp_delta is "0", the quantization parameter SubMB_QP for each sub macroblock and the quantization parameter MB_QP for each macroblock are equal to each other. Therefore, it is possible to make the quantization parameter MB_QP for each macroblock the quantization parameter SubMB_QP for each sub macroblock on the decoding side, so that the value of submb_qp_delta ("0") is not required. Therefore, it is possible to omit the transmission

of submb_qp_delta as described above. It goes without saying that submb_qp_delta having the value of "0" may be transmitted; however, it is possible to improve the coding efficiency by omitting the transmission of submb_qp_delta.

[Flow of Coding Process]

Next, a flow of each process executed by the above-described image coding apparatus **100** is described. First, an example of a flow of a coding process is described with reference to a flowchart in FIG. **7**.

At step S**101**, the A/D converter **101** A/D converts the input image. At step S**102**, the screen reorder buffer **102** stores the A/D converted image and reorders pictures in order of display into order for coding.

At step S**103**, the arithmetic unit **103** calculates difference between the image reordered by the process at step S**102** and the predicted image. The predicted image is supplied to the arithmetic unit **103** through the selector **116** from the motion prediction/compensation unit **115** in a case of the inter prediction and from the intra prediction unit **114** in a case of the intra prediction, respectively.

A data amount of difference data is smaller than that of original image data. Therefore, it is possible to compress the data amount as compared to a case where the image is directly coded.

At step S**104**, the orthogonal transformation unit **104** orthogonally transforms the difference information generated by the process at step S**103**. Specifically, the orthogonal transform such as the discrete cosine transform and the Karhunen-Loeve transform is performed and the transform coefficient is output.

At step S**105**, the quantization unit **105** and the sub macroblock quantization unit **121** obtain the quantization parameter. A flow of a quantization parameter calculation process is described later in detail.

At step S**106**, the quantization processor **153** of the quantization unit **105** quantizes the orthogonal transform coefficient obtained by the process at step S**104** by using the quantization value for each sub macroblock calculated by the process at step S**105**.

The difference information quantized by the process at step S**106** is locally decoded in a following manner. That is, at step S**107**, the inverse quantization unit **108** inversely quantizes the quantized orthogonal transform coefficient (also referred to as a quantized coefficient) generated by the process at step S**106** by characteristics corresponding to characteristics of the quantization unit **105**. At step S**108**, the inverse orthogonal transformation unit **109** inversely orthogonally transforms the orthogonal transform coefficient obtained by the process at step S**107** by characteristics corresponding to characteristics of the orthogonal transformation unit **104**.

At step S**109**, the arithmetic unit **110** adds the predicted image to the locally decoded difference information to generate the locally decoded image (image corresponding to an input to the arithmetic unit **103**). At step S**110**, the deblocking filter **111** filters the image generated by the process at step S**109**. According to this, the block distortion is removed.

At step S**111**, the frame memory **112** stores the image from which the block distortion has been removed by the process at step S**110**. Meanwhile, the image, which is not subjected to the filter process by the deblocking filter **111**, also is supplied from the arithmetic unit **110** to the frame memory **112** to be stored.

At step S**112**, the intra prediction unit **114** performs an intra prediction process in the intra prediction mode. At step S**113**, the motion prediction/compensation unit **115** performs an inter motion prediction process in which motion prediction and motion compensation in the inter prediction mode are performed.

At step S**114**, the selector **116** determines an optimal prediction mode based on each cost function value output from the intra prediction unit **114** and the motion prediction/compensation unit **115**. That is, the selector **116** selects the predicted image generated by the intra prediction unit **114** or the predicted image generated by the motion prediction/compensation unit **115**.

Also, selection information indicating the selected predicted image is supplied to the intra prediction unit **114** or the motion prediction/compensation unit **115** of which predicted image is selected. When the predicted image in the optimal intra prediction mode is selected, the intra prediction unit **114** supplies information indicating the optimal intra prediction mode (that is, the intra prediction mode information) to the lossless coding unit **106**.

When the predicted image of an optimal inter prediction mode is selected, the motion prediction/compensation unit **115** outputs information indicating the optimal inter prediction mode and information corresponding to the optimal inter prediction mode as necessary to the lossless coding unit **106**. The information corresponding to the optimal inter prediction mode includes the motion vector information, flag information, reference frame information and the like.

At step S**115**, the lossless coding unit **106** codes the transform coefficient quantized by the process at step S**106**. That is, the lossless coding such as the variable-length coding and the arithmetic coding is performed to a difference image (secondary difference image in a case of inter).

Meanwhile, the lossless coding unit **106** codes the quantization parameter calculated at step S**105** to add to the coded data.

Also, the lossless coding unit **106** codes the information about the prediction mode of the predicted image selected by the process at step S**114** to add to the coded data obtained by coding the difference image. That is, the lossless coding unit **106** codes the intra prediction mode information supplied from the intra prediction unit **114** or the information corresponding to the optimal inter prediction mode supplied from the motion prediction/compensation unit **115** and the like to add to the coded data.

At step S**116**, the accumulation buffer **107** accumulates the coded data output from the lossless coding unit **106**. The coded data accumulated in the accumulation buffer **107** is appropriately read to be transmitted to the decoding side through the transmission channel.

At step S**117**, the rate controller **117** controls the rate of the quantization operation of the quantization unit **105** such that the overflow or the underflow does not occur based on the compressed image accumulated in the accumulation buffer **107** by the process at step S**116**.

When the process at step S**117** is finished, the coding process is finished.

[Flow of Quantization Parameter Calculation Process]

Next, an example of the flow of the quantization parameter calculation process executed at step S**105** in FIG. **7** is described with reference to a flowchart in FIG. **8**.

When the quantization parameter calculation process is started, at step S**131**, the sub macroblock activity buffer **151** obtains the sub macroblock activity supplied from the rate controller **117**. The sub macroblock activity buffer **151** holds the obtained sub macroblock activity by the amount of one screen, for example.

At step S**132**, the sub macroblock quantization unit **121** obtains the sub macroblock activity by the amount of one

screen, for example, from the sub macroblock activity buffer **151**. Then, the sub macroblock quantization unit **121** calculates the quantization value for each sub macroblock by using the obtained sub macroblock activity.

At step S**133**, the quantization parameter calculation unit **152** obtains the quantization parameter pic_init_qp_minus26 by using the quantization value for each sub macroblock calculated at step S**132**.

At step S**134**, the quantization parameter calculation unit **152** obtains the quantization parameter slice_qp_delta by using the quantization value for each sub macroblock calculated at step S**132**.

At step S**135**, the quantization parameter calculation unit **152** obtains the quantization parameter mb_qp_delta by using the quantization value for each sub macroblock calculated at step S**132**.

At step S**136**, the quantization parameter calculation unit **152** obtains the quantization parameter submb_qp_delta by using the quantization value for each sub macroblock calculated at step S**132**.

After obtaining the various quantization parameters as described above, the quantization unit **105** finishes the quantization parameter operation process, returns the process to step S**105** in FIG. **7**, and allows the process at step S**106** and subsequent steps to be executed.

Since the coding process and the quantization parameter calculation process are performed in the above-described manner, the image coding apparatus **100** may set the quantization value for each sub macroblock and perform the more appropriate quantization process.

Also, since the quantization parameter calculated in this manner is transmitted to the image coding apparatus, the image coding apparatus **100** may allow the image decoding apparatus to obtain the quantization value for each sub macroblock and perform the inverse quantization by using the same.

2. Second Embodiment

[Image Decoding Apparatus]

FIG. **9** is a block diagram illustrating a principal configuration example of an image decoding apparatus to which the present technology is applied. An image decoding apparatus **200** illustrated in FIG. **9** is a decoding apparatus corresponding to an image coding apparatus **100**.

Coded data coded by the image coding apparatus **100** is transmitted to the image decoding apparatus **200** corresponding to the image coding apparatus **100** through a predetermined transmission channel to be decoded.

As illustrated in FIG. **9**, the image decoding apparatus **200** includes an accumulation buffer **201**, a lossless decoding unit **202**, an inverse quantization unit **203**, an inverse orthogonal transformation unit **204**, an arithmetic unit **205**, a deblocking filter **206**, a screen reorder buffer **207**, and a D/A converter **208**. The image decoding apparatus **200** also includes a frame memory **209**, a selector **210**, an intra prediction unit **211**, a motion prediction/compensation unit **212**, and a selector **213**.

Further, the image decoding apparatus **200** includes a sub macroblock inverse quantization unit **221**.

The accumulation buffer **201** accumulates the transmitted coded data. The coded data is coded by the image coding apparatus **100**. The lossless decoding unit **202** decodes the coded data read from the accumulation buffer **201** at a predetermined timing by a system corresponding to a coding system of a lossless coding unit **106** in FIG. **1**.

The inverse quantization unit **203** operates in cooperation with the sub macroblock inverse quantization unit **221** to inversely quantize coefficient data obtained by decoding by the lossless decoding unit **202** (quantized coefficient) by a system corresponding to a quantization system of a quantization unit **105** in FIG. **1**. That is, the inverse quantization unit **203** inversely quantizes the quantized coefficient by a method similar to that of an inverse quantization unit **108** in FIG. **1** by using a quantization parameter calculated for each sub macroblock supplied from the image coding apparatus **100**.

The inverse quantization unit **203** supplies the inversely quantized coefficient data, that is, an orthogonal transform coefficient to the inverse orthogonal transformation unit **204**. The inverse orthogonal transformation unit **204** inversely orthogonally transforms the orthogonal transform coefficient by a system corresponding to an orthogonal transform system of an orthogonal transformation unit **104** in FIG. **1** to obtain decoded residual data corresponding to residual data before orthogonal transform by the image coding apparatus **100**.

The decoded residual data obtained by inverse orthogonal transform is supplied to the arithmetic unit **205**. A predicted image is supplied from the intra prediction unit **211** or the motion prediction/compensation unit **212** through the selector **213** to the arithmetic unit **205**.

The arithmetic unit **205** adds the decoded residual data to the predicted image to obtain decoded image data corresponding to image data before subtraction of the predicted image by an arithmetic unit **103** of the image coding apparatus **100**. The arithmetic unit **205** supplies the decoded image data to the deblocking filter **206**.

The deblocking filter **206** removes block distortion from the supplied decoded image and thereafter supplies the same to the screen reorder buffer **207**.

The screen reorder buffer **207** reorders an image. That is, frames reordered into order for coding by a screen reorder buffer **102** in FIG. **1** are reordered into original order of display. The D/A converter **208** D/A converts the image supplied from the screen reorder buffer **207** and outputs the same to a display (not illustrated) for display.

An output of the deblocking filter **206** is further supplied to the frame memory **209**.

The frame memory **209**, the selector **210**, the intra prediction unit **211**, the motion prediction/compensation unit **212**, and the selector **213** correspond to a frame memory **112**, a selector **113**, an intra prediction unit **114**, a motion prediction/compensation unit **115**, and a selector **116** of the image coding apparatus **100**, respectively.

The selector **210** reads an image to which an inter process is performed and a reference image from the frame memory **209** to supply the images to the motion prediction/compensation unit **212**. Also, the selector **210** reads an image used for intra prediction from the frame memory **209** to supply the image to the intra prediction unit **211**.

Information indicating an intra prediction mode and the like obtained by decoding header information is appropriately supplied from the lossless decoding unit **202** to the intra prediction unit **211**. The intra prediction unit **211** generates the predicted image from the reference image obtained from the frame memory **209** based on this information and supplies the generated predicted image to the selector **213**.

The motion prediction/compensation unit **212** obtains the information obtained by decoding the header information (prediction mode information, motion vector information, reference frame information, a flag, various parameters and the like) from the lossless decoding unit **202**.

The motion prediction/compensation unit **212** generates the predicted image from the reference image obtained from the frame memory **209** based on the information supplied

from the lossless decoding unit **202** and supplies the generated predicted image to the selector **213**.

The selector **213** selects the predicted image generated by the motion prediction/compensation unit **212** or the intra prediction unit **211** and supplies the same to the arithmetic unit **205**.

The sub macroblock inverse quantization unit **221** obtains the quantization parameter from the inverse quantization unit **203** and obtains a quantization value for each sub macroblock by using an equation (10) and returns the same to the inverse quantization unit **203**.

[Inverse Quantization Unit]

FIG. **10** is a block diagram illustrating a detailed configuration example of the inverse quantization unit **203**.

As illustrated in FIG. **10**, the inverse quantization unit **203** includes a quantization parameter buffer **251**, an orthogonal transform coefficient buffer **252**, and an inverse quantization processor **253**.

The parameter about quantization in each layer such as a picture parameter set and a slice header of the coded data supplied from the image coding apparatus **100** is decoded by the lossless decoding unit **202** to be supplied to the quantization parameter buffer **251**. The quantization parameter buffer **251** appropriately holds the quantization parameter, and supplies the quantization parameter to the sub macroblock inverse quantization unit **221** at a predetermined timing.

The sub macroblock inverse quantization unit **221** calculates a quantization parameter SubMB_QP for each sub macroblock as represented by equations (5) to (10), for example, by using the quantization parameter supplied from the quantization parameter buffer **251** and transforms the same to the quantization value for each sub macroblock to supply the quantization value to the inverse quantization processor **253**.

Meanwhile, as described above in the first embodiment, when a value of submb_qp_delta is "0", submb_qp_delta is not transmitted. The sub macroblock inverse quantization unit **221** applies a value of a quantization parameter MB_QP for each macroblock to the quantization parameter SubMB_QP for each sub macroblock when there is no submb_qp_delta in the quantization parameter supplied from the quantization parameter buffer **251**.

Also, the quantized orthogonal transform coefficient obtained by decoding the coded data supplied from the image coding apparatus **100** by the lossless decoding unit **202** is supplied to the orthogonal transform coefficient buffer **252**. The orthogonal transform coefficient buffer **252** appropriately holds the quantized orthogonal transform coefficient and supplies the same to the inverse quantization processor **253** at a predetermined timing.

The inverse quantization processor **253** inversely quantizes the quantized orthogonal transform coefficient supplied from the orthogonal transform coefficient buffer **252** by using the quantization value for each sub macroblock supplied from the sub macroblock inverse quantization unit **221**. The inverse quantization processor **253** supplies the orthogonal transform coefficient obtained by inverse quantization to the inverse orthogonal transformation unit **204**.

As described above, the inverse quantization unit **203** may perform an inverse quantization process by using the quantization value calculated for each sub macroblock. According to this, the image decoding apparatus **200** may perform the inverse quantization process more suitable for contents of the image. Especially, even in a case where the macroblock size is extended and both of a flat area and an area including texture are included in a single macroblock, the image decoding apparatus **200** may perform an adaptive inverse quantization process suitable for each area to inhibit subjective image quality of the decoded image from deteriorating.

Meanwhile, the inverse quantization unit **108** of the image coding apparatus **100** illustrated in FIG. **1** also has a configuration similar to that of the inverse quantization unit **203** and performs a similar process. However, the inverse quantization unit **108** obtains the quantization parameter supplied from the quantization unit **105** and the quantized orthogonal transform coefficient and performs the inverse quantization.

Also, the inverse quantization unit **108** provides the quantization parameter to a sub macroblock inverse quantization unit **122**, which performs a process similar to that of the sub macroblock inverse quantization unit **221**, and allows the sub macroblock inverse quantization unit **122** to generate the quantization value for each sub macroblock.

[Flow of Decoding Process]

Next, a flow of each process executed by the above-described image decoding apparatus **200** is described. First, an example of a flow of a decoding process is described with reference to a flowchart in FIG. **11**.

When the decoding process is started, the accumulation buffer **201** accumulates the transmitted coded data at step S**201**. At step S**202**, the lossless decoding unit **202** decodes the coded data supplied from the accumulation buffer **201**. That is, an I picture, a P picture, and a B picture coded by the lossless coding unit **106** in FIG. **1** are decoded.

At that time, the motion vector information, the reference frame information, the prediction mode information (intra prediction mode or inter prediction mode), and the information such as the flag and the quantization parameter are also decoded.

When the prediction mode information is the intra prediction mode information, the prediction mode information is supplied to the intra prediction unit **211**. When the prediction mode information is the inter prediction mode information, the motion vector information corresponding to the prediction mode information is supplied to the motion prediction/compensation unit **212**.

At step S**203**, the inverse quantization unit **203** inversely quantizes the quantized orthogonal transform coefficient obtained by decoding by the lossless decoding unit **202**. At step S**204**, the inverse orthogonal transformation unit **204** inversely orthogonally transforms the orthogonal transform coefficient obtained by the inverse quantization by the inverse quantization unit **203** by a method corresponding to the orthogonal transformation unit **104** in FIG. **1**. According to this, difference information corresponding to an input of the orthogonal transformation unit **104** in FIG. **1** (output of the arithmetic unit **103**) is decoded.

At step S**205**, the arithmetic unit **205** adds the predicted image to the difference information obtained by the process at step S**204**. According to this, original image data is decoded.

At step S**206**, the deblocking filter **206** appropriately filters the decoded image obtained by the process at step S**205**. According to this, block distortion is appropriately removed from the decoded image.

At step S**207**, the frame memory **209** stores the filtered decoded image.

At step S**208**, the intra prediction unit **211** or the motion prediction/compensation unit **212** performs a prediction process of the image according to the prediction mode information supplied from the lossless decoding unit **202**.

That is, in a case where the intra prediction mode information is supplied from the lossless decoding unit **202**, the intra prediction unit **211** performs an intra prediction process in the intra prediction mode. Also, in a case where the inter prediction mode information is supplied from the lossless decoding

unit **202**, the motion prediction/compensation unit **212** performs a motion prediction process in the inter prediction mode.

At step S**209**, the selector **213** selects the predicted image. That is, the predicted image generated by the intra prediction unit **211** or the predicted image generated by the motion prediction/compensation unit **212** is supplied to the selector **213**. The selector **213** selects the unit of which predicted image is supplied and supplies the predicted image to the arithmetic unit **205**. The predicted image is added to the difference information by the process at step S**205**.

At step S**210**, the screen reorder buffer **207** reorders the frames of the decoded image data. That is, the frames of the decoded image data reordered for the coding by the screen reorder buffer **102** of the image coding apparatus **100** (FIG. **1**) are reordered into the original order of display.

At step S**211**, the D/A converter **208** D/A converts the decoded image data of which frames are reordered by the screen reorder buffer **207**. The decoded image data is output to a display not illustrated and the image is displayed.

[Inverse Quantization Process]

Next, an example of a flow of the inverse quantization process is described with reference to a flowchart in FIG. **12**.

When the inverse quantization process is started, the quantization parameter buffer **251** obtains a quantization parameter pic_init_qp_minus26 supplied from the lossless decoding unit **202** at step S**231**.

At step S**232**, the quantization parameter buffer **251** obtains a quantization parameter slice_qp_delta supplied from the lossless decoding unit **202**.

At step S**233**, the quantization parameter buffer **251** obtains the quantization parameter mb_qp_delta supplied from the lossless decoding unit **202**.

At step S**234**, the quantization parameter buffer **251** obtains a quantization parameter submb_qp_delta supplied from the lossless decoding unit **202**. However, when there is no submb_qp_delta, the process at step S**234** is omitted.

At step S**235**, the sub macroblock inverse quantization unit **221** calculates the quantization value for each sub macroblock by using various quantization parameters obtained by the processes at steps S**231** to S**234**. However, when submb_qp_delta is not supplied from the image coding apparatus **100** and the process at step S**234** is omitted, the sub macroblock inverse quantization unit **221** applies the quantization value for each macroblock to the quantization value for each sub macroblock.

At step S**236**, the inverse quantization processor **253** inversely quantizes the quantized orthogonal transform coefficient held by the orthogonal transform coefficient buffer **252** by using the quantization value for each sub macroblock calculated by the process at step S**235**.

When the process at step S**236** is finished, the inverse quantization unit **203** returns the process to step S**203** and allows the processes at step S**204** and subsequent steps to be executed.

By performing the decoding process and the inverse quantization process as described above, the image decoding apparatus **200** may perform the inverse quantization process by using the quantization value calculated for each sub macroblock and perform the inverse quantization process more suitable for the contents of the image.

3. Third Embodiment

[submb_qp_present_flag]

Although it has been described above that submb_qp_delta is appropriately transmitted as the quantization parameter, it is also possible to further transmit a flag, which acknowledges presence of submb_qp_delta for each macroblock.

In this case, a configuration of an image coding apparatus **100** is similar to a configuration example illustrated in FIG. **1**. Also, a configuration of a quantization unit **105** is similar to a configuration example illustrated in FIG. **5**. However, a quantization parameter calculation unit **152** further calculates submb_qp_present_flag, which is flag information indicating whether submb_qp_delta of which value is not "0" is present, for each macroblock. When any submb_qp_delta of sub macroblocks belonging to the macroblock has the value not "0", submb_qp_present_flag is set to "1", for example. Also, when submb_qp_delta of all the sub macroblocks belonging to the macroblock are "0", submb_qp_present_flag is set to "0", for example.

It goes without saying that a value of submb_qp_present_flag is arbitrary and any value may be used as long as it is possible to identify a case where any submb_qp_delta has the value not "0" from a case where submb_qp_delta of all the sub macroblocks are "0".

When the quantization parameter calculation unit **152** sets the value in this manner, the quantization parameter calculation unit **152** supplies submb_qp_present_flag to the lossless coding unit **106** as one of the quantization parameters. The lossless coding unit **106** adds this submb_qp_present_flag to a macroblock header, for example, and codes the same. That is, submb_qp_present_flag is transmitted together with coded data as well as another quantization parameter.

Therefore, a coding process in this case is performed as in the case described above with reference to the flowchart in FIG. **7**. Also, an example of a flow of a quantization parameter calculation process in this case is described with reference to a flowchart in FIG. **13**. In this case also, the quantization parameter calculation process is performed in a manner basically similar to that in the case illustrated with reference to the flowchart in FIG. **8**.

That is, processes at steps S**331** to S**336** are performed as the processes at steps S**131** to S**136** in FIG. **8**. However, in this case, the quantization parameter calculation unit **152** further calculates the quantization parameter submb_qp_present_flag at step S**337**.

As described above, the quantization parameter submb_qp_present_flag is calculated to be transmitted.

That is, submb_qp_present_flag is present in each macroblock header of the data. Then, submb_qp_delta is present in a sub macroblock header of the macroblock in which the value of submb_qp_present_flag is "1" and submb_qp_delta is not present in the sub macroblock header of the macroblock in which the value of submb_qp_present_flag is "0".

Such coded data is transmitted from the image coding apparatus **100** to an image decoding apparatus **200**.

A configuration of the image decoding apparatus **200** in this case is similar to a configuration example illustrated in FIG. **9**. Also, a configuration of an inverse quantization unit **203** is similar to a configuration example illustrated in FIG. **10**. However, a sub macroblock inverse quantization unit **221** calculates a quantization value for each macroblock for the macroblock in which submb_qp_present_flag is set to "0" without waiting for supply of submb_qp_delta and applies the quantization value to the quantization value for each sub macroblock.

In other words, the sub macroblock inverse quantization unit **221** obtains submb_qp_delta only when submb_qp_present_flag is "1" and calculates the quantization value for each sub macroblock.

A decoding process in this case is performed in a manner similar to that described above with reference to the flowchart

in FIG. **11**. Also, an example of a flow of an inverse quantization process in this case is described with reference to a flowchart in FIG. **14**. In this case also, the inverse quantization process is performed in a manner basically similar to that in the case described with reference to the flowchart in FIG. **12**.

That is, processes at steps S**431** to S**433** are performed as the processes at steps S**231** to S**233** in FIG. **12**. However, in this case, the quantization parameter buffer **251** obtains the quantization parameter submb_qp_present_flag stored in the macroblock header at step S**434**.

At step S**435**, the sub macroblock inverse quantization unit **221** determines whether the value of the quantization parameter submb_qp_present_flag is "1". When the value of the quantization parameter submb_qp_present_flag is "1", the quantization parameter buffer **251** obtains the quantization parameter submb_qp_delta at step S**436**. At step S**437**, the sub macroblock inverse quantization unit **221** calculates the quantization value for each sub macroblock. That is, processes similar to those at steps S**234** and S**235** in FIG. **12** are performed.

Also, when it is determined that the value of the quantization parameter submb_qp_present_flag is "0" at step S**435**, the sub macroblock inverse quantization unit **221** calculates the quantization value for each macroblock at step S**438** and applies the same as the quantization value for each sub macroblock.

When the quantization value is calculated as in the above-described manner, the inverse quantization processor **253** performs inverse quantization by using the quantization value at step S**439**.

As described above, the image decoding apparatus **200** may more easily grasp the presence of the quantization parameter submb_qp_delta and may more easily calculate the quantization value without need for an unnecessary process of searching submb_qp_delta, which is not present, by transmitting submb_qp_present_flag indicating the presence of the quantization parameter submb_qp_delta for each macroblock to use at the time of the inverse quantization.

Although the image coding apparatus, which codes by the system equivalent to the AVC, and the image decoding apparatus, which decodes by the system equivalent to the AVC, are described above as an example in the first to third embodiments, the scope of application of the present technology is not limited thereto and the present technology may be applied to every image coding apparatus and image decoding apparatus, which perform the coding process based on a block having a hierarchical structure as illustrated in FIG. **4**.

Also, the above-described various quantization parameters may be added to an arbitrary position of the coded data or may be transmitted to a decoding side separately from the coded data, for example. For example, the lossless coding unit **106** may describe the information in a bit stream as syntax. Also, the lossless coding unit **106** may store the information in a predetermined area as auxiliary information to transmit. For example, the information may be stored in a parameter set (for example, header and the like of sequence and picture) such as SEI (Supplemental Enhancement Information).

It is also possible for the lossless coding unit **106** to transmit the information from the image coding apparatus to the image decoding apparatus separately from the coded data (as another file). In this case, it is necessary to clarify correspondence relationship between the information and the coded data (such that the decoding side may grasp the relationship) but any method may be used therefor. For example, it is possible to separately create table information indicating the correspondence relationship or to embed link information indicating corresponding data in each data.

Meanwhile, it is also possible that the above-described quantization using the quantization value for each sub macroblock (calculation of the quantization parameter for each sub macroblock) is performed only for an extended macroblock not smaller than 32×32.

For example, a rate controller **117** calculates activity for each sub macroblock only when the current macroblock is the extended macroblock and calculates the activity for each macroblock when the current macroblock is a conventional macroblock not larger than 16×16 defined in an existing coding standard such as the AVC.

The sub macroblock quantization unit **121** calculates the quantization value for each sub macroblock only for the extended macroblock and calculates the quantization value for each macroblock for the conventional macroblock not larger than 16×16, for example.

The quantization parameter calculation unit **152** calculates the quantization parameter Submb_qp_delta only for the extended macroblock and does not calculate the quantization parameter submb_qp_delta for the conventional macroblock not larger than 16×16, for example.

The quantization processor **153** performs the quantization by using the quantization value for each sub macroblock only for the extended macroblock and performs the quantization by using the quantization value for each macroblock for the conventional macroblock not larger than 16×16, for example.

In the above-described manner, the image coding apparatus **100** may perform the quantization by using the quantization value for each sub macroblock only for the extended macroblock having a large area in which an effect of inhibiting deterioration in subjective image quality of a decoded image may be sufficiently expected and perform the quantization by using the quantization value for each macroblock for the macroblock having a conventional size in which the expectation for the effect is relatively small. According to this, the image coding apparatus **100** may inhibit increase in load caused by the quantization using the quantization value for each sub macroblock.

In this case, it is of course possible for the image decoding apparatus **200** to perform the inverse quantization by using the quantization value for each sub macroblock only for the extended macroblock as the image coding apparatus **100**.

For example, the sub macroblock inverse quantization unit **221** calculates the quantization value for each sub macroblock only for the extended macroblock and calculates the quantization value for each macroblock for the conventional macroblock not larger than 16×16.

Therefore, the inverse quantization processor **253** performs the inverse quantization by using the quantization value for each sub macroblock only for the extended macroblock and performs the inverse quantization by using the quantization value for each macroblock for the conventional macroblock not larger than 16×16, for example.

In the above-described manner, the image decoding apparatus **200** may perform the inverse quantization by using the quantization value for each sub macroblock only for the extended macroblock having the large area in which the effect of inhibiting the deterioration in the subjective image quality of the decoded image may be sufficiently expected and perform the inverse quantization by using the quantization value for each macroblock for the macroblock having the conventional size in which the expectation for the effect is relatively small. According to this, the image decoding apparatus **200** may inhibit the increase in the load caused by the inverse quantization using the quantization value for each sub macroblock.

Meanwhile, when submb_qp_present_flag is transmitted as in the third embodiment, it may be configured to transmit the quantization parameter submb_qp_present_flag only for the extended macroblock. In other words, transmission of the quantization parameter submb_qp_present_flag may be omitted for the macroblock having the conventional size. Of course it may be configured to transmit the quantization parameter submb_qp_present_flag having the value indicating that there is no quantization parameter submb_qp_delta of which value is other than "0" for the macroblock having the conventional size.

4. Fourth Embodiment

[Summary]

Although it has been described above that the quantization parameter is specified for each sub macroblock, a manner of assigning the quantization parameter to the sub macroblock may be other than the above-described one. For example, it is also possible to define a quantization parameter SubMB_QP assigned to each sub macroblock as represented by a following equation (11) by using a quantization parameter submb_qp_delta for each sub macroblock and a quantization parameter previous_qp for sub macroblock coded immediately before the same.

$$SubMB_QP=Clip(0,51,previous_qp+submb_qp_delta) \quad (11)$$

[Coding Unit]

Such a method is to be described below; it is hereinafter described by using a unit referred to as a coding unit in place of the above-described macroblock and sub macroblock.

For example, in a "Test Model Under Consideration" (JCTVC-B205), an extended macroblock described with reference to FIG. **4** is defined by a concept referred to as the coding unit.

The coding unit is a division unit of an image (one picture), which is a unit of process such as a coding process of image data. That is, the coding unit is a block (partial area) obtained by dividing the image (one picture) into a plurality of parts. That is, the coding unit corresponds to the above-described macroblock and sub macroblock.

FIG. **15** is a view illustrating a configuration example of the coding unit. As illustrated in FIG. **15**, an area of the coding unit may be further divided into a plurality of parts and each area may be made the coding unit of one layer lower. That is, the coding units may be hierarchically configured (configured to have a tree structure). In addition, a size of the coding unit is arbitrary and the coding units having different sizes may be present in one picture.

In an example in FIG. **15**, the size of the coding unit in a highest layer (depth=0) is set to 128×128 pixels, an area of 64×64 pixels obtained by dividing the same in half vertically and horizontally (into four) is made the coding unit in one layer lower (depth=1), and hierarchization of the coding units is similarly repeated and an area of 8×8 pixels is made the coding unit in a lowest layer (depth=4).

At that time, the coding unit in the highest layer is referred to as an LCU (Largest Coding Unit) and the coding unit of the lowest layer is referred to as a SCU (Smallest Coding Unit). That is, the LCU corresponds to the macroblock and the coding unit in the lower layer corresponds to the sub macroblock.

Meanwhile, the size and a shape of the coding unit of each layer and the number of layers are arbitrary. That is, it is not required that the sizes and the shapes of all the LCU and SCU be the same in the image (one picture), the number of layers of the coding unit may be different according to a position in the image, and a manner of dividing the area is also arbitrary. That is, the tree structure of the coding units may be an arbitrary structure.

It goes without saying that a degree of freedom of the hierarchical structure of the coding units may be partially limited such that the manners of dividing the area are the same but only the numbers of layers are different, for example. For example, as illustrated in FIG. **15**, it is possible to configure such that one area (one picture or one coding unit) is divided in half vertically and horizontally (that is, into four) in any position and the sizes of the LCU and SCU in each position are defined, thereby defining the hierarchical structure of the coding units.

The sizes of the LCU and SCU may be specified by a sequence parameter set in image compressed information, for example. It goes without saying that they may be specified by another metadata and the like.

[Assignment of Quantization Parameter]

In this embodiment, the quantization parameter submb_qp_delta is assigned to each coding unit in place of the macroblock and the sub macroblock. However, in this case, the quantization parameter submb_qp_delta is not a difference value between a quantization parameter MB_QP for each macroblock and the quantization parameter SubMB_QP for each sub macroblock but the difference value between the quantization parameter previous_qp for a previously coded coding unit and the quantization parameter SubMB_QP for the current coding unit.

In other words, the quantization parameter submb_qp_delta indicating the difference value between the quantization parameter previous_qp used for previous coding and the quantization parameter SubMB_QP for the current coding unit is assigned to each coding unit. That is, the quantization parameter submb_qp_delta satisfying the above-described equation (11) is assigned to each coding unit.

Meanwhile, it is only required that an entire area of the image be quantized, so that the quantization parameter submb_qp_delta is actually assigned to a part of the coding units such as only to the SCU, for example.

As in the above-described other embodiments, it is possible to obtain the quantization parameter SubMB_QP for the current coding unit by transforming a quantization value obtained from activity for the coding unit. Therefore, the quantization parameter submb_qp_delta for each coding unit may be calculated by using the equation (11).

FIG. **16** illustrates the configuration example of the coding unit in one LCU and an example of the quantization parameter assigned to each coding unit. As illustrated in FIG. **16**, a difference value ΔQP between the quantization parameter previous_qp used for the previous coding and the quantization parameter SubMB_QP for the current coding unit is assigned to each coding unit (CU) as the quantization parameter.

More specifically, a quantization parameter ΔQP_0 is assigned to an upper left coding unit 0 (Coding Unit 0) in the LCU. Also, a quantization parameter ΔQP_{10} is assigned to an upper left coding unit 10 (Coding Unit 10) out of four upper right coding units in the LCU. Further, a quantization parameter ΔQP_{11} is assigned to an upper right coding unit 11 (Coding Unit 11) out of the four upper right coding units in the LCU. Also, a quantization parameter ΔQP_{12} is assigned to a lower left coding unit 12 (Coding Unit 12) out of the four upper right coding units in the LCU. Further, a quantization parameter ΔQP_{13} is assigned to a lower right coding unit 13 (Coding Unit 13) out of the four upper right coding units in the LCU.

A quantization parameter ΔQP_{20} is assigned to an upper left coding unit 20 (Coding Unit 20) out of four lower left coding units in the LCU. Further, a quantization parameter ΔQP_{21} is assigned to an upper right coding unit 21 (Coding Unit 21) out of the four lower left coding units in the LCU. Also, a quantization parameter ΔQP_{22} is assigned to a lower left coding unit 22 (Coding Unit 22) out of the four lower left coding units in the LCU. Further, a quantization parameter ΔQP_{23} is assigned to a lower right coding unit 23 (Coding Unit 23) out of the four lower left coding units in the LCU. A quantization parameter ΔQP_3 is assigned to a lower right coding unit 3 (Coding Unit 3) in the LCU.

The quantization parameter for the coding unit processed immediately before the LCU is set to PrevQP. Further, suppose that the upper left coding unit 0 (Coding Unit 0) in the LCU is the current coding unit first processed in the LCU.

A quantization parameter CurrentQP for the current coding unit is calculated as represented by a following equation (12).

$$CurrentQP=PrevQP+\Delta QP_0 \tag{12}$$

Suppose that the coding unit to be processed after the coding unit 0 is the upper left coding unit 10 (Coding Unit 10) out of the upper right four coding units in the LCU illustrated in FIG. **16**.

When the coding unit 10 becomes the processing target, the quantization parameter CurrentQP of the current coding unit is calculated as represented by following equations (13) and (14).

$$PrevQP=CurrentQP \tag{13}$$

$$CurrentQP=PrevQP+\Delta QP_{10} \tag{14}$$

In this manner, by making the quantization parameter assigned to each coding unit the difference value between the quantization parameter for the previously coded coding unit and the current quantization parameter, it is not necessary to calculate the quantization parameter for each macroblock, so that a quantization process may be performed more easily.

Meanwhile, when the difference value between the quantization parameter for the already coded coding unit and the current quantization parameter is calculated, it is also possible to calculate the difference value from the coding unit coded before the current coding unit (coding unit coded before the previously coded coding unit in the LCU). However, the difference value between the quantization parameter for the previously coded coding unit and the current quantization parameter is preferable.

That is, when the difference value between the quantization parameter for the previously coded coding unit and the current quantization parameter is calculated, it is only required that only the quantization parameter for the previously coded coding unit be stored in a memory and the quantization parameter may be managed in a FIFO (First In First Out) system. Therefore, when the difference value of the quantization parameter is calculated, the quantization parameter is easily managed and a used amount of memory is small, so that there is an advantage in mounting.

Meanwhile, such a quantization parameter cu_qp_delta for each coding unit is defined by syntax of the coding unit as illustrated in FIG. **17**, for example, to be transmitted to a decoding side. That is, the quantization parameter cu_qp_delta for each coding unit corresponds to the above-described quantization parameter sub_qp_delta.

[Image Coding Apparatus]

FIG. **18** is a block diagram illustrating a principal configuration example of an image coding apparatus to which the present technology is applied. An image coding apparatus **300** illustrated in FIG. **18** assigns the quantization parameter cu_qp_delta to each coding unit as described above.

As illustrated in FIG. **18**, the image coding apparatus **300** has a configuration basically similar to that of an image coding apparatus **100** in FIG. **1**. However, the image coding apparatus **300** includes a coding unit quantization unit **305** and a rate controller **317** in place of a quantization unit **105**, a rate controller **117**, and a sub macroblock quantization unit **121** of the image coding apparatus **100**. Also, the image coding apparatus **300** includes a coding unit inverse quantization unit **308** in place of an inverse quantization unit **108** and a sub macroblock inverse quantization unit **122** of the image coding apparatus **100**.

The rate controller **317** controls a rate of quantization operation of the coding unit quantization unit **305** such that overflow or underflow does not occur based on a compressed image accumulated in an accumulation buffer **107**. Further, the rate controller **317** provides information indicating complexity of the image for each coding unit to the coding unit quantization unit **305**. The coding unit quantization unit **305** performs quantization for each coding unit by using the activity. Also, the coding unit quantization unit **305** calculates the quantization parameter for each coding unit. The coding unit quantization unit **305** supplies an orthogonal transform coefficient (coefficient data) quantized for each coding unit and the calculated quantization parameter for each coding unit to the lossless coding unit **106** and codes the same to transmit. Further, the coding unit quantization unit **305** also provides the orthogonal transform coefficient (coefficient data) quantized for each coding unit and the calculated quantization parameter for each coding unit also to the coding unit inverse quantization unit **308**.

The coding unit inverse quantization unit **308** performs inverse quantization for each coding unit by using the quantization parameter for each coding unit supplied from the coding unit quantization unit **305**. The coding unit inverse quantization unit **308** supplies the orthogonal transform coefficient (coefficient data) inversely quantized for each coding unit to the inverse orthogonal transformation unit **109**. The coding unit inverse quantization unit **308** is to be described later in detail in description of an image decoding apparatus.

[Detailed Configuration about Quantization]

FIG. **19** is a block diagram illustrating a detailed configuration example of the rate controller **317** and the coding unit quantization unit **305**.

As illustrated in FIG. **19**, the rate controller **317** includes an activity calculation unit **321** and an activity buffer **322**.

The activity calculation unit **321** obtains the image being a target of the coding process (current coding unit) from a screen reorder buffer **102** and calculates the activity being information indicating dispersion of pixel values as information indicating the complexity of the image. That is, the activity calculation unit **321** calculates the activity for each coding unit. Meanwhile, it is only required that the quantization process be performed for an entire image, so that it is also possible that the activity is calculated only for a part of the coding units such as only for the SCU, for example.

The activity buffer **322** holds the activity for each coding unit calculated by the activity calculation unit **321** and provides the same to the quantization unit **105** at a predetermined timing. The activity buffer **322** holds the obtained activity for each coding unit by an amount of one screen, for example.

A method of calculating the activity is arbitrary and may be a method similar to that of the above-described MPEG2 Test Model, for example. Also, contents of the information indicating the complexity of the image also are arbitrary and may be the information other than such activity.

The coding unit quantization unit **305** includes a coding unit quantization value calculation unit **331**, a picture quantization parameter calculation unit **332**, a slice quantization parameter calculation unit **333**, a coding unit quantization parameter calculation unit **334**, and a coding unit quantization unit **335**.

The coding unit quantization value calculation unit **331** calculates the quantization value for each coding unit based on the activity for each coding unit (information indicating the complexity of the image for each coding unit) supplied from the rate controller **317**. The quantization value for each coding unit may be calculated by a method similar to that in a case where the quantization value for each LCU is calculated from the activity for each LCU. Meanwhile, it is only required that the quantization process be performed for the entire image, so that it is also possible that the quantization value for each coding unit is calculated only for a part of the coding units. Hereinafter, it is assumed that the quantization value for each coding unit is calculated only for the SCU as an example.

After obtaining the quantization value for each coding unit, the coding unit quantization value calculation unit **331** supplies the quantization value for each coding unit to the picture quantization parameter calculation unit **332**.

The picture quantization parameter calculation unit **332** obtains a quantization parameter pic_init_qp_minus26 for each picture by using the quantization value for each coding unit.

The slice quantization parameter calculation unit **333** obtains a quantization parameter slice_qp_delta for each slice by using the quantization value for each coding unit.

The coding unit quantization parameter calculation unit **334** obtains a quantization parameter cu_qp_delta for each coding unit by using the quantization parameter prevQP used for the previous coding.

The quantization parameters generated by the picture quantization parameter calculation unit **332** to the coding unit quantization parameter calculation unit **334** are supplied to the lossless coding unit **106**, coded, and transmitted to the decoding side, and supplied also to the coding unit inverse quantization unit **308**.

The coding unit quantization unit **335** quantizes the orthogonal transform coefficient of the current coding unit by using the quantization value for each coding unit.

The coding unit quantization unit **335** supplies the orthogonal transform coefficient quantized for each coding unit to the lossless coding unit **106** and the coding unit inverse quantization unit **308**.

[Flow of Coding Process]

The image coding apparatus **300** performs the coding process basically as in the case of the image coding apparatus **100** in FIG. **1** described with reference to FIG. **6**.

[Flow of Quantization Parameter Calculation Process]

An example of a flow of a quantization parameter calculation process executed in the coding process is described with reference to a flowchart in FIG. **20**.

When the quantization parameter calculation process is started, at step S**531**, the coding unit quantization value calculation unit **331** obtains the activity for each coding unit supplied from the rate controller **317**.

At step S**532**, the coding unit quantization value calculation unit **331** calculates the quantization value for each coding unit by using the activity for each coding unit.

At step S**533**, the picture quantization parameter calculation unit **332** obtains the quantization parameter pic_init_qp_minus26 by using the quantization value for each coding unit calculated at step S**532**.

At step S**534**, the slice quantization parameter calculation unit **333** obtains the quantization parameter slice_qp_delta by using the quantization value for each coding unit calculated at step S**532**.

At step S**535**, the coding unit quantization parameter calculation unit **334** obtains the quantization parameter cu_qp_delta for each coding unit (ΔQP_0 to ΔQP_{23} and the like in FIG. **16**) by using the quantization parameter prevQP used for the previous coding.

After obtaining the various quantization parameters in the above-described manner, the coding unit quantization unit **305** finishes the quantization parameter calculation process and performs subsequent processes of the coding process.

Since the coding process and the quantization parameter calculation process are performed in the above-described manner, the image coding apparatus **300** may set the quantization value for each coding unit and perform a more appropriate quantization process according to contents of the image.

Also, since the quantization parameter calculated in this manner is transmitted to the image decoding apparatus, the image coding apparatus **300** may allow the image decoding apparatus to perform the inverse quantization for each coding unit.

Meanwhile, the coding unit inverse quantization unit **308** included in the image coding apparatus **300** performs a process similar to that of the coding unit inverse quantization unit included in the image decoding apparatus corresponding to the image coding apparatus **300**. That is, the image coding apparatus **300** may also perform the inverse quantization for each coding unit.

[Image Decoding Apparatus]

FIG. **21** is a block diagram illustrating a principal configuration example of the image decoding apparatus to which the present technology is applied. An image decoding apparatus **400** illustrated in FIG. **21**, which corresponds to the above-described image coding apparatus **300**, correctly decodes a coded stream (coded data) generated by the coding of the image data by the image coding apparatus **300** to generate a decoded image.

As illustrated in FIG. **21**, the image decoding apparatus **400** has a configuration basically similar to that of an image decoding apparatus **200** in FIG. **8** and performs a similar process. However, the image decoding apparatus **400** includes a coding unit inverse quantization unit **403** in place of an inverse quantization unit **203** and a sub macroblock inverse quantization unit **221** of the image decoding apparatus **200**.

The coding unit inverse quantization unit **403** inversely quantizes the orthogonal transform coefficient quantized for each coding unit by the image coding apparatus **300** by using the quantization parameter and the like for each coding unit supplied from the image coding apparatus **300**.

FIG. **22** is a block diagram illustrating a principal configuration example of the coding unit inverse quantization unit **403**. As illustrated in FIG. **22**, the coding unit inverse quantization unit **403** includes a quantization parameter buffer **411**, an orthogonal transform coefficient buffer **412**, a coding unit quantization value calculation unit **413**, and a coding unit inverse quantization processor **414**.

The quantization parameter in each layer such as a picture parameter set and a slice header of the coded data supplied from the image coding apparatus **300** is decoded by a lossless decoding unit **202** to be supplied to the quantization parameter buffer **411**. The quantization parameter buffer **411** appropriately holds the quantization parameter and supplies the

same to the coding unit quantization value calculation unit **413** at a predetermined timing.

The coding unit quantization value calculation unit **413** calculates the quantization value for each coding unit as represented by equations (36) to (39), for example, by using the quantization parameter supplied from the quantization parameter buffer **411** and supplies the quantization value to the coding unit inverse quantization processor **414**.

Also, the quantized orthogonal transform coefficient obtained by decoding of the coded data supplied from the image coding apparatus **300** by the lossless decoding unit **202** is supplied to the orthogonal transform coefficient buffer **412**. The orthogonal transform coefficient buffer **412** appropriately holds the quantized orthogonal transform coefficient to supply to the coding unit inverse quantization processor **414** at a predetermined timing.

The coding unit inverse quantization processor **414** inversely quantizes the quantized orthogonal transform coefficient supplied from the orthogonal transform coefficient buffer **412** by using the quantization value for each coding unit supplied from the coding unit quantization value calculation unit **413**. The coding unit inverse quantization processor **414** supplies the orthogonal transform coefficient obtained by the inverse quantization to an inverse orthogonal transformation unit **204**.

As described above, the coding unit inverse quantization unit **403** may perform an inverse quantization process by using the quantization value calculated for each coding unit. According to this, the image decoding apparatus **400** may perform the inverse quantization process more suitable for the contents of the image. Especially, even in a case where a size of the macroblock is extended (the size of the LCU is large) and both of a flat area and an area including texture are included in a single LCU, the image decoding apparatus **400** may perform an adaptive inverse quantization process suitable for each area to inhibit subjective image quality of the decoded image from deteriorating.

Meanwhile, the coding unit inverse quantization unit **308** of the image coding apparatus **300** illustrated in FIG. **18** also has a configuration similar to that of the coding unit inverse quantization unit **403** and performs a similar process. However, the coding unit inverse quantization unit **308** obtains the quantization parameter and the quantized orthogonal transform coefficient supplied from the coding unit quantization unit **305** and performs the inverse quantization.

[Flow of Decoding Process]

The image decoding apparatus **400** performs a decoding process in a manner basically similar to that in a case of the image decoding apparatus **200** in FIG. **8** described with reference to the flowchart in FIG. **10**.

[Flow of Inverse Quantization Process]

An example of a flow of the inverse quantization process executed in the decoding process by the image decoding apparatus **400** is described with reference to a flowchart in FIG. **23**.

When the inverse quantization process is started, the quantization parameter buffer **411** obtains the quantization parameter pic_init_qp_minus26 supplied from the lossless decoding unit **202** at step S**631**.

At step S**632**, the quantization parameter buffer **411** obtains the quantization parameter slice_qp_delta supplied from the lossless decoding unit **202**.

At step S**633**, the quantization parameter buffer **411** obtains the quantization parameter cu_qp_delta supplied from the lossless decoding unit **202**.

At step S**634**, the coding unit quantization value calculation unit **413** calculates the quantization value for each coding unit by using the various quantization parameters obtained by the processes at steps S**631** to S**633** and the previously used quantization parameter PrevQP.

At step S**635**, the coding unit inverse quantization processor **414** inversely quantizes the quantized orthogonal transform coefficient held by the orthogonal transform coefficient buffer **412** by using the quantization value for each coding unit calculated by the process at step S**634**.

When the process at step S**635** is finished, the coding unit inverse quantization unit **403** returns the process to the decoding process and allows subsequent processes to be executed.

As described above, by performing the decoding process and the inverse quantization process, the image decoding apparatus **400** may perform the inverse quantization process by using the quantization value calculated for each coding unit and perform the inverse quantization process more suitable for the contents of the image.

As described above, in order to decrease a code amount of the quantization parameter for each coding unit (sub macroblock), a difference value dQP between a predetermined quantization parameter and the quantization parameter SubMB_QP (quantization parameter submb_qp_delta) is obtained to be transmitted instead of transmitting the quantization parameter SubMB_QP itself. Two methods represented by following equations (15) and (16) have been described above as methods of calculating the quantization parameter dQP.

$$dQP = CurrentQP - LCUQP \tag{15}$$

$$dQP = CurrentQP - PreviousQP \tag{16}$$

In the equations (15) and (16), CurrentQP represents the quantization parameter for the current coding unit (CU). Also, LCUQP represents the quantization parameter for the LCU to which the current CU belongs (that is, the current LCU). Further, PreviousQP represents the quantization parameter for the CU processed immediately before the current CU.

That is, in a case of the equation (15), the difference value between the quantization parameter for the current LCU and the quantization parameter for the current CU is transmitted. Also, in a case of the equation (16), the difference value between the quantization parameter of the previously processed CU and the quantization parameter of the current CU is transmitted.

The method of calculating such quantization parameter dQP for transmission is arbitrary and may be other than the above-described two examples.

For example, it is also possible to transmit the difference value between a quantization parameter SliceQP for the slice to which the current CU belongs (that is, the current slice) and the quantization parameter for the current CU as represented by a following equation (17).

$$dQP = CurrentQP - SliceQP \tag{17}$$

The quantization parameter CurrentQP may be obtained by transformation of the quantization value of the current CU calculated by the coding unit quantization value calculation unit **331** by the coding unit quantization parameter calculation unit **334** in FIG. **19**, for example. Also, the quantization parameter SliceQP may be obtained by the slice quantization parameter calculation unit **333** in FIG. **19** using the quantization parameter pic_init_qp_minus26 obtained by the picture quantization parameter calculation unit **332** and the quantization parameter slice_qp_delta obtained by itself, for example.

Therefore, for example, the coding unit quantization parameter calculation unit **334** in FIG. **19** may obtain the

quantization parameter dQP by using the values. The coding unit quantization parameter calculation unit **334** supplies the quantization parameter dQP to the lossless coding unit **106** to transmit to the decoding side.

The quantization parameter pic_init_qp_minus26 and the quantization parameter slice_qp_delta are defined in the "Test Model Under Consideration" (JCTVC-B205), for example, and may be set by a method similar to that of a conventional coding system.

On the decoding side, the quantization parameter for the CU may be obtained from the quantization parameter dQP transmitted from a coding side.

For example, the coding unit quantization value calculation unit **413** obtains the quantization parameter SubMB_QP for the CU as represented by a following equation (18) from the quantization parameter dQP and transforms the same to obtain the quantization value.

$$\text{SubMB_QP}=\text{Clip}(\text{minQP},\text{maxQP},\text{SliceQP}+\text{submb_qp_delta}) \quad (18)$$

In the equation (18), minQP represents a minimum quantization parameter defined in advance and maxQP represents a maximum quantization parameter defined in advance.

In this manner, in a case where the quantization parameter SliceQP is used for obtaining the quantization parameter dQP also, the quantization and the inverse quantization may be performed as the above-described two methods. That is, not only the quantization and the inverse quantization more suitable for the contents of the image may be performed, but also the code amount of the quantization parameter may be decreased.

A table in which characteristics of the processes of the methods are compared to each other is illustrated in FIG. **24**. In the table illustrated in FIG. **24**, a method on the top (referred to as a first method) is a method of obtaining the quantization parameter dQP by using the quantization parameter for the LCU. A second top method (referred to as a second method) is a method of obtaining the quantization parameter dQP by using the quantization parameter for the CU processed immediately before the current CU. A method on the bottom (referred to a as third method) is a method of obtaining the quantization parameter dQP by using the quantization parameter for the current slice.

In the table in FIG. **24**, easiness of a pipeline process and coding efficiency are compared to each other as the characteristics of the methods. As indicated in the table in FIG. **24**, the pipeline process is easier in the first method than in the second method. The pipe line process is easier in the third method than in the first method. Further, the coding efficiency is better in the first method than in the third method. The coding efficiency is better in the second method than in the first method.

That is, in general, the closer the area is to the current area, the higher the correlativity with the current area (such as the coding unit and the sub macroblock). Therefore, it is possible to further improve the coding efficiency of the quantization parameter dQP by obtaining the quantization parameter dQP by using the area closer to the current area.

However, in general, the farther the area is from the current area, the earlier this is processed. Therefore, time until the current area is processed becomes longer. That is, allowed time for processing delay and the like becomes longer. Therefore, when the quantization parameter dQP is obtained by using the area farther from the current area, delay is less likely to occur, which is advantageous for the pipeline process.

As described above, the methods have different characteristics, so that an appropriate method differs depending on a condition having priority. Meanwhile, it is also possible that each method may be selected. A selecting method is arbitrary. For example, a user and the like may determine in advance the method to be applied. For example, it is also possible that any method is adaptively selected according to an arbitrary condition (for each arbitrary unit of process or when an arbitrary event occurs, for example).

When any method is adaptively selected, it is also possible to generate flag information indicating the selected method and transmit the flag information from the coding side (quantization side) to the decoding side (inverse quantization side). In this case, the decoding side (inverse quantization side) may select the same method as that of the coding side (quantization side) by referring to the flag information.

Also, the method of calculating the quantization parameter dQP is arbitrary and may be other than the above-described method. The number of prepared calculating methods is also arbitrary. Also, the value may be variable. It is also possible to transmit information defining the quantization parameter dQP from the coding side (quantization side) to the decoding side (inverse quantization side).

The method of calculating the difference value of the quantization parameter is illustrated in consideration of the characteristics of the above-described methods. FIG. **25** illustrates an example of configurations of the LCU and CU. The (number) indicates order of coding (decoding) process of the coding units.

In an LCU(0), the order of coding of the coding units is as follows:

CU(0)
→CU(10)→CU(11)→CU(12)→CU(13)
→CU(20)→CU(21)
→CU(30)→CU(31)→CU(32)→CU(33)
→CU(23)
→CU(3)

In this case, the difference value of the quantization parameter is as follows:

The coding unit CU(0) at the head of the LCU transmits the difference value between the quantization parameter SliceQP for the slice to which the CU(0) belongs (that is, the current slice) and the quantization parameter for the current CU(0) by using the equation (17).

$$dQP(CU(0))=\text{CurrentQP}(CU0)-\text{SliceQP}$$

Next, the coding units CU(10) to CU(3) other than the one at the head of the LCU transmit the difference value between the quantization parameter (CurrentCU) for the current CU and the previously coded CU (PrevisousCU) by using the equation (16).

$$dQP=\text{CurrentQP}(CUi)-\text{PreviousQP}(CUi-1)$$

That is, when it is described with reference to FIG. **25**, the difference values of the quantization parameter are as follows:

$$dQP(CU(10))=\text{CurrentQP}(CU(10))-\text{PrevisouQP}(CU(0))$$

$$dQP(CU(11))=\text{CurrentQP}(CU(11))-\text{PrevisouQP}(CU(10))$$

$$dQP(CU(12))=\text{CurrentQP}(CU(12))-\text{PrevisouQP}(CU(11))$$

$$dQP(CU(13))=\text{CurrentQP}(CU(13))-\text{PrevisouQP}(CU(12))$$

$$dQP(CU(20))=\text{CurrentQP}(CU(20))-\text{PrevisouQP}(CU(13))$$

$dQP(CU(21))=CurrentQP(CU(21))-PrevisouQP(CU(20))$

$dQP(CU(30))=CurrentQP(CU(30))-PrevisouQP(CU(21))$

$dQP(CU(31))=CurrentQP(CU(31))-PrevisouQP(CU(30))$

$dQP(CU(32))=CurrentQP(CU(32))-PrevisouQP(CU(31))$

$dQP(CU(33))=CurrentQP(CU(33))-PrevisouQP(CU32))$

$dQP(CU(23))=CurrentQP(CU(23))-PrevisouQP(CU33))$

$dQP(CU(3))=CurrentQP(CU(3))-PrevisouQP(CU23)$

For other LCU(1) to LCU(N) also, the difference values of the quantization parameter are similarly calculated to be transmitted.

In this manner, it is possible to satisfy both of the easiness of the pipeline process and the coding efficiency by adopting advantage of the characteristics of each method (indicated by double circle in the drawing) by calculating and transmitting the difference value of the quantization parameter.

Meanwhile, in view of mounting, when closed control is performed in the LUC, the coding unit CU(0) at the head of the LCU may calculate the difference value of the quantization parameter by using the equation (15).

Meanwhile, the quantization parameter dQP described above is not required to be set for all the coding units, and this may be set only for the CU for which it is desirable to set a value different from a reference quantization parameter such as LCUQP, PreviousQP, and SliceQP.

For this purpose, it is also possible to add syntax MinCUForDQPCoded to the slice header (SliceHeader), for example.

FIG. **26** is a view illustrating an example of the syntax of the slice header. The number on a left end of each row is a row number assigned for description.

In an example in FIG. **26**, MinCUForDQPCoded is set in a 22nd line. This MinCUForDQPCoded specifies a minimum CU size for which dQP is set. For example, even when a minimum size of the CU is 8×8, if it is specified that MinCUForDQPCoded=16, the coding unit quantization parameter calculation unit **334** of the image coding apparatus **300** sets dQP only for the CU having a size not smaller than 16×16 and does not set dQP for the CU having the size of 8×8. That is, in this case, dQP for the CU having the size not smaller than 16×16 is transmitted. Meanwhile, MinCUForDQPCoded may be set as a flag (for example 0:4×4, 1:8×8, 2:16×16 and the like) to identify (select) the minimum CU size for which dQP is set from the CU size (4×4, 8×8, 16×16, 32×32 and the like) set at the time of coding (decoding) as a method of specifying the minimum CU size for which dQP is set.

For example, when one who makes an encoder only wants to control with the CU having the size of 16×16, it is required to transmit all dQP as 0 in the CU having the size of 8×8 and this might deteriorate the coding efficiency.

Therefore, by setting such syntax MinCUForDQPCoded, it is possible to omit the transmission of dQP for the CU having the size of 8×8 in this case, thereby inhibiting the coding efficiency from deteriorating.

The coding unit quantization value calculation unit **413** of the image decoding apparatus **400** grasps that dQP for the CU having the size of 8×8 is not transmitted according to such syntax and calculates the quantization value by using the reference quantization parameter such as LCUQP, PreviousQP, and SliceQP.

Meanwhile, MinCUForDQPCoded may be stored in other than the slice header. For example, this may be stored in the picture parameter set (PictureParameterSet). It is possible to support operation to change this value after scene change, for example, by storing the same in the slice header or the picture parameter set.

However, when MinCUForDQPCoded is stored in the slice header, it is possible to support a case where the picture is multi-sliced and processed in parallel for each slice also, which is more desirable.

5. Fifth Embodiment

[Summary]

Although it has been described above that the quantization parameter for each sub macroblock (coding unit smaller than the LCU) is transmitted from the image coding apparatus to the image decoding apparatus, in this case, it is required that the image decoding apparatus also may obtain the quantization parameter for each sub macroblock (coding unit smaller than the LCU) and perform the quantization for each sub macroblock (coding unit smaller than the LCU) by using the quantization parameter.

Therefore, it may be configured such that the image coding apparatus sets the quantization parameter for each macroblock (LCU) and provides the quantization parameter for each macroblock (LCU) to the image decoding apparatus while performing a quantization process for each sub macroblock (coding unit smaller than the LCU).

For example, when calculating activity for each macroblock (LCU) by the above-described TestModel 5, the image coding apparatus calculates the activity for each block (coding unit) of 8×8, 16×16 and the like, smaller than the macroblock (LCU) even when a size of the macroblock (LCU) is 64×64, 128×128 and the like.

Then, the image coding apparatus determines a quantization parameter value for each 8×8 block or 16×16 block based on the activity for each 8×8 block or 16×16 block based on a method of the TestModel 5.

However, the quantization parameter is set for each macroblock (LCU).

For example, suppose that the size of the LCU (macroblock) is 64×64 pixels as illustrated in FIG. **27**. When the image coding apparatus calculates the activity for each 16×16 coding unit to calculate the quantization parameter for the LCU, the activity for each coding unit (block) becomes QP_{00} to QP_{33}.

In a case of the AVC, a quantization parameter QP is designed such that the quantization process twice as coarse as the original one is performed when a value thereof increments by 6 such as from 6 to 12, for example, as illustrated in FIG. **28**.

Deterioration in a chrominance signal is easily noticeable especially at a lower bit rate, that is, with a higher QP. Therefore, a default quantization parameter QP_C for the chrominance signal is defined in advance with respect to a quantization parameter QP_Y for a luminance signal.

A user may control this relationship by setting information about ChromaQPOffset included in image compressed information.

On the other hand, in a case of this embodiment, the image coding apparatus determines a quantization parameter QP_{MB} for the macroblock as represented by a following equation (19) at a first step.

[Equation 3]

$$QP_{MB} = \min_{ij=0,3} QP_{ij} \quad (19)$$

At a second step, the quantization process for each block is performed by using values of the QP_{00} to QP_{33}. As a result, a position of a non-zero coefficient in each block is stored in a memory.

At a third step, the quantization process for each block is performed by using a value of the QP_{MB}.

At a fourth step, only a value in the position of the coefficient being the non-zero coefficient also at the second step out of the non-zero obtained at the third step is transmitted to lossless coding information as coded information.

By performing such a process, although only the QP_{MB} is transmitted to the image compressed information as the quantization parameter, it becomes possible to realize adaptive quantization and improve subjective image quality of the image compressed information being an output by performing a pseudo process for each block by using the values of the QP_{00} to QP_{33}.

[Image Coding Apparatus]

FIG. **29** is a block diagram illustrating a principal configuration example of the image coding apparatus to which the present technology is applied. As illustrated in FIG. **29**, an image coding apparatus **500** in this case has a configuration basically similar to that of an image coding apparatus **100** in FIG. **1** and performs a similar process.

However, the image coding apparatus **500** includes a rate controller **317**, a coding unit quantization unit **504**, and a quantization unit **505** in place of a quantization unit **105**, a rate controller **117**, and a sub macroblock quantization unit **121** of the image coding apparatus **100**.

Although the image coding apparatus **100** in FIG. **1** includes a sub macroblock inverse quantization unit **122** in addition to an inverse quantization unit **108**, the image coding apparatus **500** only includes the inverse quantization unit **108**. That is, an inverse quantization process is performed for each LCU (macroblock) as in conventional AVC and the like. This also applies to the image decoding apparatus corresponding to the image coding apparatus **500**.

The coding unit quantization unit **504** performs the quantization for each coding unit (for example, SCU) by using the activity for each coding unit obtained by the rate controller **317**.

The quantization unit **505** obtains the quantization parameter for each LCU and performs the quantization for each coding unit by using the same. Then, the quantization unit **505** replaces the non-zero coefficient out of quantized orthogonal transform coefficients of the coding units obtained by the coding unit quantization unit **504** with a result of the quantization process by the quantization unit **505** (quantized orthogonal transform coefficient) in the same position.

A result of this replacement is supplied to the lossless coding unit **106** and the inverse quantization unit **108** as a result of the quantization. Also, the quantization parameter for each LCU calculated by the quantization unit **505** is supplied to the lossless coding unit **106** and the inverse quantization unit **108**.

The inverse quantization unit **108** and an inverse quantization unit of the image decoding apparatus (not illustrated) perform inverse quantization by using the quantization parameter for each LCU as in the case of the conventional AVC and the like.

[Configurations of Rate Controller, Coding Unit Quantization Unit, and Quantization Unit]

FIG. **30** is a block diagram illustrating a detailed configuration example of the rate controller, the coding unit quantization unit, and the quantization unit in FIG. **29**.

As illustrated in FIG. **30**, the coding unit quantization unit **504** includes a coding unit quantization parameter determination unit **511**, a coding unit quantization processor **512**, and a non-zero coefficient position buffer **513**.

The coding unit quantization parameter determination unit **511** determines a quantization parameter CU_QP for each coding unit (for example, SCU) in a layer lower than the LCU by using the activity for each coding unit (for example, SCU) in the layer lower than the LCU supplied from an activity buffer **322** of the rate controller **317**. The coding unit quantization parameter determination unit **511** supplies the quantization parameter CU_QP for each coding unit to the coding unit quantization processor **512** and an LCU quantization parameter determination unit **522** of the quantization unit **505**.

The coding unit quantization processor **512** quantizes the orthogonal transform coefficient supplied from an orthogonal transform coefficient buffer **521** of the quantization unit **505** for each coding unit (for example, SCU) in the layer lower than the LCU by using the quantization parameter CU_QP for each coding unit supplied from the coding unit quantization parameter determination unit **511**. The coding unit quantization processor **512** supplies the position of the coding unit in which the value is not 0 (non-zero coefficient) out of the quantized orthogonal transform coefficients of the coding units obtained by the quantization to the non-zero coefficient position buffer **513** and allow the same to hold this position.

The non-zero coefficient position buffer **513** supplies the held position of the non-zero coefficient to a coefficient replacing unit **524** of the quantization unit **505** at a predetermined timing.

As illustrated in FIG. **30**, the quantization unit **505** includes the orthogonal transform coefficient buffer **521**, the LCU quantization parameter determination unit **522**, an LCU quantization processor **523**, and the coefficient replacing unit **524**.

The orthogonal transform coefficient buffer **521** holds the orthogonal transform coefficient supplied from an orthogonal transformation unit **104** and supplies the held orthogonal transform coefficient to the coding unit quantization processor **512** and the LCU quantization processor **523** at a predetermined timing.

The LCU quantization parameter determination unit **522** determines a minimum value in the LCU of the quantization parameters CU_QP for each coding unit supplied from the coding unit quantization parameter determination unit **511** as a quantization parameter LCU_QP for each LCU as represented by the above-described equation (19). The LCU quantization parameter determination unit **522** supplies the quantization parameter LCU_QP (minimum value of CU_QP in the current LCU) for each LCU to the LCU quantization processor **523**.

The LCU quantization processor **523** quantizes the orthogonal transform coefficient supplied from the orthogonal transform coefficient buffer **521** for each coding unit (for example, SCU) in the layer lower than the LCU by using the quantization parameter LCU_QP for each LCU supplied from the LCU quantization parameter determination unit **522**. The LCU quantization processor **523** supplies the quantized orthogonal transform coefficient for each coding unit obtained by the quantization to the coefficient replacing unit **524**.

The coefficient replacing unit **524** replaces the coefficient in the position different from the position of the non-zero coefficient supplied from the non-zero coefficient position buffer **513** out of the coefficients of which value is not 0 (non-zero coefficient) of the orthogonal transform coefficients quantized by the LCU quantization processor **523** with 0.

That is, the coefficient replacing unit **524** adopts a value of the result of the quantization as the quantized orthogonal transform coefficient only for the coding unit (in the layer lower than the LCU) in which the obtained value of the result of the quantization is not 0 in both of the quantization using the quantization parameter CU_QP determined for each coding unit in the layer lower than the LCU and the quantization using the quantization parameter LCU_QP determined for each LCU. On the other hand, the coefficient replacing unit **524** sets all the values of all of the quantized orthogonal transform coefficients to 0 for other coding units (in the layer lower than the LCU).

The coefficient replacing unit **524** supplies the quantized orthogonal transform coefficient of which value is appropriately replaced in this manner to the lossless coding unit **106** and the inverse quantization unit **108** together with the quantization parameter LCU_QP determined for each LCU.

The lossless coding unit **106** codes supplied coefficient data and quantization parameter to supply to the image decoding apparatus (capable of decoding coded data generated by the image coding apparatus **500**) corresponding to the image coding apparatus **500**. The image decoding apparatus performs the inverse quantization by using the quantization parameter LCU_QP for each LCU supplied from the image coding apparatus **500** as in the case of the conventional AVC and the like.

The inverse quantization unit **108** similarly inversely quantizes the coefficient data supplied from the coefficient replacing unit **524** by using the quantization parameter LCU_QP for each LCU supplied from the coefficient replacing unit **524**.

Meanwhile, the inverse quantization unit **108** has a configuration basically similar to that of the inverse quantization unit **203** described with reference to FIG. **10**. However, in the case of the inverse quantization unit **108**, an inverse quantization processor **253** inversely quantizes the quantized orthogonal transform coefficient supplied from an orthogonal transform coefficient buffer **252** by using the quantization parameter (quantization parameter LCU_QP for each LCU) supplied from a quantization parameter buffer **251**.

[Flow of Coding Process]

Next, an example of a flow of a coding process executed by the image coding apparatus **500** is described with reference to a flowchart in FIG. **31**. In this case, each process of the coding process is performed in a manner basically similar to that in each process of the coding process described with reference to the flowchart in FIG. **7**.

That is, processes at steps S**701** to S**704** are performed as the processes at steps S**101** to S**104** in FIG. **7**. However, the quantization process at step S**705** is performed in place of steps S**105** and S**106** in FIG. **7**. Also, processes at steps S**706** to S**716** are performed as the processes at steps S**106** to S**117**.

[Flow of Quantization Process]

Next, an example of a flow of the quantization process executed at step S**705** in FIG. **31** is described with reference to a flowchart in FIG. **32**.

When the quantization process is started, an activity calculation unit **321** calculates the activity for each coding unit at step S**731**.

At step S**732**, the coding unit quantization parameter determination unit **511** determines the quantization parameter CU_QP for each coding unit in the layer lower than the LCU.

At step S**733**, the LCU quantization parameter determination unit **522** determines the quantization parameter LCU_QP for each LCU.

At step S**734**, the coding unit quantization processor **512** performs the quantization by using the quantization parameter CU_QP for each coding unit in the layer lower than the LCU.

At step S**735**, the non-zero coefficient position buffer **513** holds the position of the non-zero coefficient generated by the quantization process at step S**734**.

At step S**736**, the LCU quantization processor **523** performs the quantization by using the quantization parameter LCU_QP for each LCU.

At step S**737**, the coefficient replacing unit **524** replaces the value of the quantized orthogonal transform coefficient of the coding unit in the layer lower than the LCU in the position different from the position of the non-zero coefficient held by the process at step S**735** with 0.

When replacement is finished, the quantization process is finished and the process is returned to step S**705** in FIG. **31**, then the processes at step S**706** and subsequent steps are executed.

As described above, in an image information coding apparatus and an image information decoding apparatus of which output and input are the image compressed information, respectively, based on a coding system using an extended macroblock, it is possible to perform the adaptive quantization based on characteristics of a flat area and a texture area even when they are mixed in a single LCU (macroblock) by performing the pseudo quantization process for each code unit (sub macroblock) in the layer lower than the LCU, thereby improving the subjective image quality.

6. Sixth Embodiment

[Application to Multi-View Image Coding/Multi-View Image Decoding]

The above-described series of processes may be applied to multi-view image coding and multi-view image decoding. FIG. **33** illustrates an example of a multi-view image coding system.

As illustrated in FIG. **33**, a multi-view image includes images from a plurality of viewpoints and an image from a predetermined viewpoint out of a plurality of viewpoints is specified as a base view image. An image from each viewpoint other than the base view image is treated as non-base view image.

When the multi-view image coding as illustrated in FIG. **33** is performed, it is also possible to obtain difference between quantization parameters of each view (identical view).

(1) Base-View:

(1-1) dQP(base view)=Current_CU_QP(base view)−LCU_QP(base view)

(1-2) dQP(base view)=Current_CU_QP(base view)−Previsous_CU_QP(base view)

(1-3) dQP(base view)=Current_CU_QP(base view)−Slice_QP(base view)

(2) Non-Base-View:

(2-1) dQP(non-base view)=Current_CU_QP(non-base view)−LCU_QP(non-base view)

(2-2) dQP(non-base view)=CurrentQP(non-base view−PrevisousQP(non-base view)

(2-3) dQP(non-base view)=Current_CU_QP(non-base view)−Slice_QP(non-base view)

When the multi-view image coding is performed, it is also possible to obtain the difference between the quantization parameters for each view (different views).

(3) Base-View/Non-Base View:

(3-1) dQP(inter-view)=Slice_QP(base view)−Slice_QP (non-base view)

(3-2) dQP(inter-view)=LCU_QP(base view)−LCU_QP (non-base view)

(4) Non-Base View/Non-Base View:

(4-1) dQP(inter-view)=Slice_QP(non-base view i)−Slice_QP(non-base view j)

(4-2) dQP(inter-view)=LCU_QP(non-base view i)−LCU_QP(non-base view j)

In this case, it is also possible to combine the above-described (1) to (4). For example, in the non-base view, a method of obtaining the difference between the quantization parameters in a slice level between the base view and the non-base view (3-1 and 2-3 are combined) and a method of obtaining the difference between the quantization parameters in an LCU level between the base view and the non-base view (3-2 and 2-1 are combined) are considered. In this manner, it is possible to improve coding efficiency also in a case where the multi-view coding is performed by repeatedly applying the difference.

As in the above-described method, it is also possible to set a flag to identify whether there is dQP of which value is not 0 for each dQP described above.

[Multi-View Image Coding Apparatus]

FIG. **34** is a view illustrating a multi-view image coding apparatus, which performs the above-described multi-view image coding. As illustrated in FIG. **34**, a multi-view image coding apparatus **600** includes a coding unit **601**, a coding unit **602**, and a multiplexing unit **603**.

The coding unit **601** codes the base view image to generate a base view image coded stream. The coding unit **602** codes the non-base view image to generate a non-base view image coded stream. The multiplexing unit **603** multiplexes the base view image coded stream generated by the coding unit **601** and the non-base view image coded stream generated by the coding unit **602** to generate a multi-view image coded stream.

An image coding apparatus **100** (FIG. **1**), an image coding apparatus **300** (FIG. **18**), or an image coding apparatus **500** (FIG. **29**) may be applied to the coding unit **601** and the coding unit **602** of the multi-view image coding apparatus **600**. In this case, the multi-view image coding apparatus **600** sets a difference value between the quantization parameter set by the coding unit **601** and the quantization parameter set by the coding unit **602** to transmit.

[Multi-View Image Decoding Apparatus]

FIG. **35** is a view illustrating a multi-view image decoding apparatus, which performs the above-described multi-view image decoding. As illustrated in FIG. **35**, a multi-view image decoding apparatus **610** includes a demultiplexing unit **611**, a decoding unit **612**, and a decoding unit **613**.

The demultiplexing unit **611** demultiplexes the multi-view image coded stream in which the base view image coded stream and the non-base view image coded stream are multiplexed to extract the base view image coded stream and the non-base view image coded stream. The decoding unit **612** decodes the base view image coded stream extracted by the demultiplexing unit **611** to obtain the base view image. The decoding unit **613** decodes the non-base view image coded stream extracted by the demultiplexing unit **611** to obtain the non-base view image.

It is possible to apply an image decoding apparatus **200** (FIG. **9**) or an image decoding apparatus **400** (FIG. **21**) to the decoding unit **612** and the decoding unit **613** of the multi-view image decoding apparatus **610**. In this case, the multi-view image decoding apparatus **610** sets the quantization parameter from the difference value between the quantization parameter set by the coding unit **601** and the quantization parameter set by the coding unit **602** to perform inverse quantization.

7. Seventh Embodiment

[Application to Hierarchical Image Point Coding/Hierarchical Image Decoding]

The above-described series of processes may be applied to hierarchical image coding/hierarchical image decoding. FIG. **36** illustrates an example of a multi-view image coding system.

As illustrated in FIG. **36**, a hierarchical image includes images of a plurality of layers (resolutions) and an image of a predetermined layer out of a plurality of resolutions is specified as a base layer image. An image of each layer other than the base layer image is treated as a non-base layer image.

When the hierarchical image coding (spatial scalability) as illustrated in FIG. **36** is performed, it is also possible to obtain difference between quantization parameters of each layer (identical layer):

(1) Base-Layer:

(1-1) dQP(base layer)=Current_CU_QP(base layer)−LCU_QP(base layer)

(1-2) dQP(base layer)=Current_CU_QP(base layer)−Previsous_CU_QP(base layer)

(1-3) dQP(base layer)=Current_CU_QP(base layer)−Slice_QP(base layer)

(2) Non-Base-Layer:

(2-1) dQP(non-base layer)=Current_CU_QP(non-base layer)−LCU_QP(non-base layer)

(2-2) dQP(non-base layer)=CurrentQP(non-base layer)−PrevisousQP(non-base layer)

(2-3) dQP(non-base layer)=Current_CU_QP(non-base layer)−Slice_QP(non-base layer)

When the hierarchical coding is performed, it is also possible to obtain the difference between the quantization parameters of each layer (different layers).

(3) Base-Layer/Non-Base Layer:

(3-1) dQP(inter-layer)=Slice_QP(base layer)−Slice_QP (non-base layer)

(3-2) dQP(inter-layer)=LCU_QP(base layer)−LCU_QP (non-base layer)

(4) Non-Base Layer/Non-Base Layer:

(4-1) dQP(inter-layer)=Slice_QP(non-base layer i)−Slice_QP(non-base layer j)

(4-2) dQP(inter-layer)=LCU_QP(non-base layer i)−LCU_QP(non-base layer j)

In this case, it is also possible to combine the above-described (1) to (4). For example, in the non-base layer, a method of obtaining the difference between the quantization parameters in a slice level between the base layer and the non-base layer (3-1 and 2-3 are combined) and a method of obtaining the difference between the quantization parameters in an LCU level between the base layer and the non-base layer (3-2 and 2-1 are combined) are considered. In this manner, by repeatedly applying the difference, it becomes possible to improve coding efficiency also when the hierarchical coding is performed.

It is also possible to set a flag to identify whether there is dQP of which value is not 0 for each dQP described above as in the above-described method.

[Hierarchical Image Coding Apparatus]

FIG. **37** is a view illustrating a hierarchical image coding apparatus, which performs the above-described hierarchical image coding. As illustrated in FIG. **37**, a hierarchical image coding apparatus **620** includes a coding unit **621**, a coding unit **622**, and a multiplexing unit **623**.

The coding unit **621** codes the base layer image to generate a base layer image coded stream. The coding unit **622** codes the non-base layer image to generate a non-base layer image coded stream. The multiplexing unit **623** multiplexes the base layer image coded stream generated by the coding unit **621** and the non-base layer image coded stream generated by the coding unit **622** to generate a hierarchical image coded stream.

An image coding apparatus **100** (FIG. **1**), an image coding apparatus **300** (FIG. **18**), or an image coding apparatus **500** (FIG. **29**) may be applied to the coding unit **621** and the coding unit **622** of the hierarchical image coding apparatus **620**. In this case, the hierarchical image coding apparatus **600** sets a difference value between the quantization parameter set by the coding unit **621** and the quantization parameter set by the coding unit **622** to transmit.

[Hierarchical Image Decoding Apparatus]

FIG. **38** is a view illustrating a hierarchical image decoding apparatus, which performs the above-described hierarchical image decoding. As illustrated in FIG. **38**, a hierarchical image decoding apparatus **630** includes a demultiplexing unit **631**, a decoding unit **632**, and a decoding unit **633**.

The demultiplexing unit **631** demultiplexes the hierarchical image coded stream obtained by multiplexing the base layer image coded stream and the non-base layer image coded stream to extract the base layer image coded stream and the non-base layer image coded stream. The decoding unit **632** decodes the base layer image coded stream extracted by the demultiplexing unit **631** to obtain the base layer image. The decoding unit **633** decodes the non-base layer image coded stream extracted by the demultiplexing unit **631** to obtain the non-base layer image.

An image decoding apparatus **200** (FIG. **9**) or an image decoding apparatus **400** (FIG. **21**) may be applied to the decoding unit **632** and the decoding unit **633** of the hierarchical image decoding apparatus **630**. In this case, the hierarchical image decoding apparatus **630** sets the quantization parameter from the difference value between the quantization parameter set by the coding unit **631** and the quantization parameter set by the coding unit **632** to perform inverse quantization.

8. Eighth Embodiment

[Computer]

It is possible that the above-described series of processes is executed by hardware or executed by software. In this case, it may be configured as a computer illustrated in FIG. **39**, for example.

In FIG. **39**, a CPU (Central Processing Unit) **701** of a personal computer **700** executes various processes according to a program stored in a ROM (Read Only Memory) **702** or a program loaded from a storage unit **713** into a RAM (Random Access Memory) **703**. Data necessary for the CPU **701** to execute the various processes also are appropriately stored in the RAM **703**.

The CPU **701**, the ROM **702**, and the RAM **703** are connected to one another through a bus **704**. An input/output interface **710** also is connected to the bus **704**.

An input unit **711** formed of a keyboard, a mouse and the like, an output unit **712** formed of a display formed of a CRT (Cathode Ray Tube) and an LCD (Liquid Crystal Display), a speaker and the like, the storage unit **713** formed of a hard disc and the like, and a communication unit **714** formed of a modem and the like are connected to the input/output interface **710**. The communication unit **714** performs a communication process through a network including the Internet.

A drive **715** is connected to the input/output interface **710** as needed, a removable medium **721** such as a magnetic disc, an optical disc, a magnetooptical disc, and a semiconductor memory is appropriately mounted thereon, and a computer program read from the medium is installed on the storage unit **713** as needed.

When the above-described series of processes is executed by the software, a program, which composes the software, is installed from the network or a recording medium.

The recording medium is composed not only of the removable medium **721** including the magnetic disc (including a flexible disc), the optical disc (including a CD-ROM (Compact Disc-Read Only Memory) and a DVD (Digital Versatile Disc)), the magnetooptical disc (including an MD (Mini Disc)), and the semiconductor memory, in which the program is recorded, distributed to a user for distributing the program separately from an apparatus main body but also of the ROM **702** in which the program is recorded and the hard disc included in the storage unit **713** distributed to the user in a state being embedded in advance in the apparatus main body as illustrated in FIG. **39**, for example.

Meanwhile, the program executed by the computer may be the program of which processes are chronologically performed in order described in this specification or the program of which processes are performed in parallel or at a required timing such as when this is called.

Also, in this specification, a step of describing the program recorded in the recording medium includes not only the processes chronologically performed in the described order but also the processes executed in parallel or individually, which are not necessarily chronologically performed.

Also, in this specification, a system means an entire apparatus including a plurality of devices (apparatus).

It is also possible to divide the configuration described above as one apparatus (or processor) into a plurality of apparatuses (or processors). Other way round, it is also possible to put the configurations described above as a plurality of apparatuses (or processors) together as one apparatus (or processor). It goes without saying that a configuration other than the above-described one may be added to the configuration of each apparatus (or each processor). Further, it is also possible to add a part of the configuration of a certain apparatus (or processor) to the configuration of another apparatus (or another processor) as long as the configuration and operation as an entire system are substantially the same. That is, an embodiment of the present technology is not limited to the above-described embodiments and various modifications may be made without departing from the spirit of the present technology.

An image coding apparatus **100** (FIG. **1**), an image coding apparatus **300** (FIG. **18**), an image coding apparatus **500** (FIG. **29**), a multi-view image coding apparatus **600** (FIG. **34**), a hierarchical image coding apparatus **620** (FIG. **37**), an image decoding apparatus **200** (FIG. **9**), an image decoding apparatus **400** (FIG. **21**), a multi-view image decoding apparatus **610** (FIG. **35**), and a hierarchical image decoding apparatus **630** (FIG. **38**) according to the above-described embodiments are applicable to various electronic devices such as a transmitter or a receiver in satellite broadcasting, cable broadcasting to a cable television and the like, distribution on the Internet, distribution to a terminal through cellular commu-

nication and the like, a recording apparatus, which records an image on the medium such as the optical disc, the magnetic disc, and a flash memory, or a reproducing apparatus, which reproduces the image from a storage medium. Four applications are hereinafter described.

[Television Apparatus]

FIG. **40** illustrates an example of a schematic configuration of a television apparatus to which the above-described embodiment is applied. A television apparatus **900** includes an antenna **901**, a tuner **902**, a demultiplexer **903**, a decoder **904**, a video signal processor **905**, a display unit **906**, a voice signal processor **907**, a speaker **908**, an external interface **909**, a controller **910**, a user interface **911**, and a bus **912**.

The tuner **902** extracts a signal of a desired channel from a broadcast signal received through the antenna **901** and demodulates the extracted signal. Then, the tuner **902** outputs a coded bit stream obtained by demodulation to the demultiplexer **903**. That is, the tuner **902** serves as transmitting means in the television apparatus **900**, which receives the coded stream in which the image is coded.

The demultiplexer **903** separates a video stream and a voice stream of a program to be watched from the coded bit stream and outputs each separated stream to the decoder **904**.

Also, the demultiplexer **903** extracts auxiliary data such as EPG (Electronic Program Guide) from the coded bit stream and supplies the extracted data to the controller **910**. Meanwhile, the demultiplexer **903** may descramble when the coded bit stream is scrambled.

The decoder **904** decodes the video stream and the voice stream input from the demultiplexer **903**. Then, the decoder **904** outputs video data generated by a decoding process to the video signal processor **905**. Also, the decoder **904** outputs voice data generated by the decoding process to the voice signal processor **907**.

The video signal processor **905** reproduces the video data input from the decoder **904** and allows the display unit **906** to display video. The video signal processor **905** may also allow the display unit **906** to display an application screen supplied through the network. The video signal processor **905** may also perform an additional process such as noise removal, for example, to the video data according to setting. Further, the video signal processor **905** may generate a GUI (Graphical User Interface) image such as a menu, a button, and a cursor, for example, and superimpose the generated image on an output image.

The display unit **906** is driven by a drive signal supplied from the video signal processor **905** to display the video or image on a video screen of a display device (for example, a liquid crystal display, a plasma display, an OELD (Organic ElectroLuminescence Display (organic EL display) and the like).

The voice signal processor **907** performs a reproducing process such as D/A conversion and amplification to the voice data input from the decoder **904** and allows the speaker **908** to output the voice. The voice signal processor **907** may also perform an additional process such as the noise removal to the voice data.

The external interface **909** is the interface for connecting the television apparatus **900** and an external device or the network. For example, the video stream or the voice stream received through the external interface **909** may be decoded by the decoder **904**. That is, the external interface **909** also serves as the transmitting means in the television apparatus **900**, which receives the coded stream in which the image is coded.

The controller **910** includes a processor such as the CPU and a memory such as the RAM and the ROM. The memory stores the program executed by the CPU, program data, the EPG data, data obtained through the network and the like. The program stored in the memory is read by the CPU at startup of the television apparatus **900** to be executed, for example. The CPU controls operation of the television apparatus **900** according to an operation signal input from the user interface **911**, for example, by executing the program.

The user interface **911** is connected to the controller **910**. The user interface **911** includes a button and a switch for the user to operate the television apparatus **900**, a receiver of a remote control signal and the like, for example. The user interface **911** detects operation by the user through the components to generate the operation signal and outputs the generated operation signal to the controller **910**.

The bus **912** connects the tuner **902**, the demultiplexer **903**, the decoder **904**, the video signal processor **905**, the voice signal processor **907**, the external interface **909**, and the controller **910** to one another.

In the television apparatus **900** configured in this manner, the decoder **904** has functions of the image decoding apparatus **200** (FIG. **9**), the image decoding apparatus **400** (FIG. **21**), the multi-view image decoding apparatus **610** (FIG. **35**), or the hierarchical image decoding apparatus **630** (FIG. **38**) according to the above-described embodiments. Therefore, the decoder **904** calculates a quantization value for each sub macroblock by using a quantization parameter such as sub-mb_qp_delta supplied from a coding side to perform inverse quantization for the video decoded by the television apparatus **900**. Therefore, it is possible to perform an inverse quantization process more suitable for contents of the image, thereby inhibiting subjective image quality of a decoded image from deteriorating.

[Mobile Phone]

FIG. **41** illustrates an example of a schematic configuration of a mobile phone to which the above-described embodiment is applied. A mobile phone **920** is provided with an antenna **921**, a communication unit **922**, a voice codec **923**, a speaker **924**, a microphone **925**, a camera unit **926**, an image processor **927**, a multiplexing/separating unit **928**, a recording/reproducing unit **929**, a display unit **930**, a controller **931**, an operation unit **932**, and a bus **933**.

The antenna **921** is connected to the communication unit **922**. The speaker **924** and the microphone **925** are connected to the voice codec **923**. The operation unit **932** is connected to the controller **931**. The bus **933** connects the communication unit **922**, the voice codec **923**, the camera unit **926**, the image processor **927**, the multiplexing/separating unit **928**, the recording/reproducing unit **929**, the display unit **930**, and the controller **931** to one another.

The mobile phone **920** performs operation such as transmission/reception of a voice signal, transmission/reception of an e-mail or image data, image taking, and recording of data in various operation modes including a voice communication mode, a data communication mode, an imaging mode, and a television-phone mode.

In the voice communication mode, an analog voice signal generated by the microphone **925** is supplied to the voice codec **923**. The voice codec **923** converts the analog voice signal to the voice data and A/D converts the converted voice data to compress. Then, the voice codec **923** outputs the compressed voice data to the communication unit **922**. The communication unit **922** codes and modulates the voice data to generate a transmission signal. Then, the communication unit **922** transmits the generated transmission signal to a base station (not illustrated) through the antenna **921**. Also, the communication unit **922** amplifies a wireless signal received through the antenna **921** and applies frequency conversion to

the same to obtain a reception signal. Then, the communication unit **922** generates the voice data by demodulating and decoding the reception signal and outputs the generated voice data to the voice codec **923**. The voice codec **923** expands the voice data and D/A converts the same to generate the analog voice signal. Then, the voice codec **923** supplies the generated voice signal to the speaker **924** to allow the same to output the voice.

In the data communication mode, for example, the controller **931** generates character data composing the e-mail according to the operation by the user through the operation unit **932**. Also, the controller **931** allows the display unit **930** to display characters. The controller **931** generates e-mail data according to a transmission instruction from the user through the operation unit **932** to output the generated e-mail data to the communication unit **922**. The communication unit **922** codes and modulates the e-mail data to generate the transmission signal. Then, the communication unit **922** transmits the generated transmission signal to the base station (not illustrated) through the antenna **921**. Also, the communication unit **922** amplifies the wireless signal received through the antenna **921** and applies the frequency conversion to the same to obtain the reception signal. Then, the communication unit **922** demodulates and decodes the reception signal to restore the e-mail data and outputs the restored e-mail data to the controller **931**. The controller **931** allows the display unit **930** to display contents of the e-mail data and allows the storage medium of the recording/reproducing unit **929** to store the e-mail data.

The recording/reproducing unit **929** includes an arbitrary readable/writable storage medium. For example, the storage medium may be a built-in storage medium such as the RAM and the flash memory and may be an externally-mounted storage medium such as the hard disc, the magnetic disc, the magnetooptical disc, the optical disc, a USB memory, and a memory card.

In the imaging mode, for example, the camera unit **926** takes an image of an object to generate the image data and outputs the generated image data to the image processor **927**. The image processor **927** codes the image data input from the camera unit **926** and stores the coded stream in the storage medium of the recording/reproducing unit **929**.

Also, in the television-phone mode, for example, the multiplexing/separating unit **928** multiplexes the video stream coded by the image processor **927** and the voice stream input from the voice codec **923** and outputs the multiplexed stream to the communication unit **922**. The communication unit **922** codes and modulates the stream to generate the transmission signal. Then, the communication unit **922** transmits the generated transmission signal to the base station (not illustrated) through the antenna **921**. Also, the communication unit **922** amplifies the wireless signal received through the antenna **921** and applies the frequency conversion to the same to obtain the reception signal. The transmission signal and the reception signal may include the coded bit stream. Then, the communication unit **922** restores the stream by demodulating and decoding the reception signal and outputs the restored stream to the multiplexing/separating unit **928**. The multiplexing/separating unit **928** separates the video stream and the voice stream from the input stream and outputs the video stream and the voice stream to the image processor **927** and the voice codec **923**, respectively. The image processor **927** decodes the video stream to generate the video data. The video data is supplied to the display unit **930** and a series of images is displayed by the display unit **930**. The voice codec **923** expands the voice stream and D/A converts the same to generate the analog voice signal. Then, the voice codec **923** supplies the generated voice signal to the speaker **924** to output the voice.

In the mobile phone **920** configured in this manner, the image processor **927** has the functions of the image coding apparatus **100** (FIG. **1**), the image coding apparatus **300** (FIG. **18**), the image coding apparatus **500** (FIG. **29**), the multi-view image coding apparatus **600** (FIG. **34**), or the hierarchical image coding apparatus **620** (FIG. **37**) and the functions of the image decoding apparatus **200** (FIG. **9**), the image decoding apparatus **400** (FIG. **21**), the multi-view image decoding apparatus **610** (FIG. **35**), or the hierarchical image decoding apparatus **630** (FIG. **38**) according to the above-described embodiments. Therefore, the image processor **927** calculates the quantization value for each sub macroblock and quantizes an orthogonal transform coefficient by using the quantization value for each sub macroblock for the video coded and decoded by the mobile phone **920**. In this manner, it is possible to perform the quantization process more suitable for the contents of the image and generate the coded data so as to inhibit the subjective image quality of the decoded image from deteriorating. Also, the image processor **927** calculates the quantization value for each sub macroblock by using the quantization parameter such as submb_qp_delta supplied from the coding side to perform the inverse quantization. Therefore, it is possible to perform the inverse quantization process more suitable for the contents of the image to inhibit the subjective image quality of the decoded image from deteriorating.

Although it has been described above as the mobile phone **920**, the image coding apparatus and the image decoding apparatus to which the present technology is applied may be applied to any apparatus having an imaging function and a communication function similar to those of the mobile phone **920** such as a PDA (Personal Digital Assistants), a smartphone, a UMPC (Ultra Mobile Personal Computer), a netbook, and a notebook computer, for example, as in the case of the mobile phone **920**.

[Recording/Reproducing Apparatus]

FIG. **42** illustrates an example of a schematic configuration of the recording/reproducing apparatus to which the above-described embodiment is applied. The recording/reproducing apparatus **940** codes the voice data and the video data of a received broadcast program to record on the recording medium, for example. Also, the recording/reproducing apparatus **940** may code the voice data and the video data obtained from another apparatus to record on the recording medium, for example. Also, the recording/reproducing apparatus **940** reproduces the data recorded on the recording medium by a monitor and the speaker according to the instruction of the user. At that time, the recording/reproducing apparatus **940** decodes the voice data and the video data.

The recording/reproducing apparatus **940** is provided with a tuner **941**, an external interface **942**, an encoder **943**, a HDD (Hard Disk Drive) **944**, a disc drive **945**, a selector **946**, a decoder **947**, an OSD (On-Screen Display) **948**, a controller **949**, and a user interface **950**.

The tuner **941** extracts a signal of a desired channel from the broadcast signal received through an antenna (not illustrated) and demodulates the extracted signal. Then, the tuner **941** outputs the coded bit stream obtained by the demodulation to the selector **946**. That is, the tuner **941** serves as the transmitting means in the recording/reproducing apparatus **940**.

The external interface **942** is the interface for connecting the recording/reproducing apparatus **940** and the external device or the network. The external interface **942** may be an

IEEE1394 interface, a network interface, a USB interface, a flash memory interface and the like, for example. For example, the video data and the voice data received through the external interface **942** are input to the encoder **943**. That is, the external interface **942** serves as the transmitting means in the recording/reproducing apparatus **940**.

The encoder **943** codes the video data and the voice data when the video data and the voice data input from the external interface **942** are not coded. Then, the encoder **943** outputs the coded bit stream to the selector **946**.

The HDD **944** records the coded bit stream in which content data such as the video and the voice are compressed, various programs and other data on an internal hard disc. The HDD **944** reads the data from the hard disc when reproducing the video and the voice.

The disc drive **945** records and reads the data on and from the mounted recording medium. The recording medium mounted on the disc drive **945** may be the DVD disc (DVD-Video, DVD-RAM, DVD-R, DVD-RW, DVD+R, DVD+RW and the like), a Blu-ray (registered trademark) disc and the like, for example.

The selector **946** selects the coded bit stream input from the tuner **941** or the encoder **943** and outputs the selected coded bit stream to the HDD **944** or the disc drive **945** when recording the video and the voice. Also, the selector **946** outputs the coded bit stream input from the HDD **944** or the disc drive **945** to the decoder **947** when reproducing the video and the voice.

The decoder **947** decodes the coded bit stream to generate the video data and the voice data. Then, the decoder **947** outputs the generated video data to the OSD **948**. Also, the decoder **904** outputs the generated voice data to an external speaker.

The OSD **948** reproduces the video data input from the decoder **947** to display the video. The OSD **948** may also superimpose the GUI image such as the menu, the button, and the cursor, for example, on the displayed video.

The controller **949** includes the processor such as the CPU and the memory such as the RAM and ROM. The memory stores the program executed by the CPU, the program data and the like. The program stored in the memory is read by the CPU to be executed on activation of the recording/reproducing apparatus **940**, for example. The CPU controls operation of the recording/reproducing apparatus **940** according to an operation signal input from the user interface **950**, for example, by executing the program.

The user interface **950** is connected to the controller **949**. The user interface **950** includes a button and a switch for the user to operate the recording/reproducing apparatus **940** and a receiver of a remote control signal, for example. The user interface **950** detects operation by the user through the components to generate the operation signal and outputs the generated operation signal to the controller **949**.

In the recording/reproducing apparatus **940** configured in this manner, the encoder **943** has the functions of the image coding apparatus **100** (FIG. **1**), the image coding apparatus **300** (FIG. **18**), the image coding apparatus **500** (FIG. **29**), the multi-view image coding apparatus **600** (FIG. **34**), or the hierarchical image coding apparatus **620** (FIG. **37**) according to the above-described embodiments. Also, the decoder **947** has the functions of the image decoding apparatus **200** (FIG. **9**), the image decoding apparatus **400** (FIG. **21**), the multi-view image decoding apparatus **610** (FIG. **35**), and the hierarchical image decoding apparatus **630** (FIG. **38**) according to the above-described embodiments. Therefore, the quantization value for each sub macroblock is calculated and the orthogonal transform coefficient is quantized by using the quantization value for each sub macroblock for the video coded and decoded by the recording/reproducing apparatus **940**. In this manner, it is possible to perform the quantization process more suitable for the contents of the image and generate the coded data so as to inhibit the subjective image quality of the decoded image from deteriorating. Also, the quantization value for each sub macroblock is calculated by using the quantization parameter such as submb_qp_delta supplied from the coding side and the inverse quantization is performed. Therefore, it is possible to perform the inverse quantization process more suitable for the contents of the image and inhibit the subjective image quality of the decoded image from deteriorating.

[Imaging Apparatus]

FIG. **43** illustrates an example of a schematic configuration of an imaging apparatus to which the above-described embodiment is applied. An imaging apparatus **960** takes an image of the object to generate the image, codes the image data and records the same on the recording medium.

The imaging apparatus **960** is provided with an optical block **961**, an imaging unit **962**, a signal processor **963**, an image processor **964**, a display unit **965**, an external interface **966**, a memory **967**, a media drive **968**, an OSD **969**, a controller **970**, a user interface **971**, and a bus **972**.

The optical block **961** is connected to the imaging unit **962**. The imaging unit **962** is connected to the signal processor **963**. The display unit **965** is connected to the image processor **964**. The user interface **971** is connected to the controller **970**. The bus **972** connects the image processor **964**, the external interface **966**, the memory **967**, the media drive **968**, the OSD **969**, and the controller **970** to one another.

The optical block **961** includes a focus lens, a diaphragm mechanism and the like. The optical block **961** forms an optical image of the object on an imaging surface of the imaging unit **962**. The imaging unit **962** includes an image sensor such as a CCD and a CMOS and converts the optical image formed on the imaging surface to an image signal as an electric signal by photoelectric conversion. Then, the imaging unit **962** outputs the image signal to the signal processor **963**.

The signal processor **963** performs various camera signal processes such as knee correction, gamma correction, color correction to the image signal input from the imaging unit **962**. The signal processor **963** outputs the image data after the camera signal process to the image processor **964**.

The image processor **964** codes the image data input from the signal processor **963** to generate the coded data. Then, the image processor **964** outputs the generated coded data to the external interface **966** or the media drive **968**. Also, the image processor **964** decodes the coded data input from the external interface **966** or the media drive **968** to generate the image data. Then, the image processor **964** outputs the generated image data to the display unit **965**. The image processor **964** may also output the image data input from the signal processor **963** to the display unit **965** to display the image. The image processor **964** may also superimpose data for display obtained from the OSD **969** on the image output to the display unit **965**.

The OSD **969** generates the GUI image such as the menu, the button, and the cursor, for example, and outputs the generated image to the image processor **964**.

The external interface **966** is composed as an USB input/output terminal, for example. The external interface **966** connects the imaging apparatus **960** and a printer when printing the image, for example. Also, a drive is connected to the external interface **966** as needed. The removable medium such as the magnetic disc and the optical disc is mounted on the drive, for example, and the program read from the removable medium may be installed on the imaging apparatus **960**.

Further, the external interface **966** may be configured as a network interface connected to the network such as a LAN and the Internet. That is, the external interface **966** serves as the transmitting means in the imaging apparatus **960**.

The recording medium mounted on the media drive **968** may be an arbitrary readable/writable removable medium such as the magnetic disc, the magnetooptical disc, the optical disc, and the semiconductor memory, for example. It is also possible that the recording medium is fixedly mounted on the media drive **968** to compose a non-portable storage unit such as a built-in hard disc drive or SSD (Solid State Drive), for example.

The controller **970** includes the processor such as the CPU and the memory such as the RAM and the ROM. The memory stores the program executed by the CPU and the program data. The program stored in the memory is read by the CPU at startup of the imaging apparatus **960** to be executed, for example. The CPU controls operation of the imaging apparatus **960** according to the operation signal input from the user interface **971**, for example, by executing the program.

The user interface **971** is connected to the controller **970**. The user interface **971** includes a button, a switch and the like for the user to operate the imaging apparatus **960**, for example. The user interface **971** detects the operation by the user through the components to generate the operation signal and outputs the generated operation signal to the controller **970**.

In the imaging apparatus **960** configured in this manner, the image processor **964** has the functions of the image coding apparatus **100** (FIG. **1**), the image coding apparatus **300** (FIG. **18**), the image coding apparatus **500** (FIG. **29**), the multi-view image coding apparatus **600** (FIG. **34**), or the hierarchical image coding apparatus **620** (FIG. **37**) and the functions of the image decoding apparatus **200** (FIG. **9**), the image decoding apparatus **400** (FIG. **21**), the multi-view image decoding apparatus **610** (FIG. **35**), or the hierarchical image decoding apparatus **630** (FIG. **38**) according to the above-described embodiments. Therefore, the image processor **964** calculates the quantization value for each sub macroblock and quantizes the orthogonal transform coefficient by using the quantization value for each sub macroblock for the video coded and decoded by the imaging apparatus **960**. In this manner, it is possible to perform the quantization process more suitable for the contents of the image and generate the coded data so as to inhibit the subjective image quality of the decoded image from deteriorating. Also, the image processor **964** calculates the quantization value for each sub macroblock by using the quantization parameter such as submb_qp_delta supplied from the coding side and performs the inverse quantization. Therefore, it is possible to perform the inverse quantization process more suitable for the contents of the image and inhibit the subjective image quality of the decoded image from deteriorating.

It goes without saying that the image coding apparatus and the image decoding apparatus to which the present technology is applied may be applied to the apparatus and system other than the above-described apparatus.

Meanwhile, an example in which the quantization parameter is transmitted from the coding side to the decoding side has been described in this specification. It is possible that a method of transmitting a quantization matrix parameter is transmitted or recorded as separate data associated with the coded bit stream instead of being multiplexed with the coded bit stream. Herein, the term "associate" means that the image included in the bit stream (or a part of the image such as a slice and a block) and information corresponding to the image may be linked with each other at the time of decoding. That is, the information may be transmitted on a transmission channel other than that of the image (or bit stream). Also, the information may be recorded on the recording medium other than that of the image (or bit stream) (or another recording area of the same recording medium). Further, it is possible that the information and the image (or bit stream) are associated with each other in an arbitrary unit such as a plurality of frames, one frame, or a part of the frame, for example.

Although preferred embodiments of this disclosure have been described in detail with reference to the attached drawings, the technical scope of this disclosure is not limited to such examples. It is clear that one skilled in the art of this disclosure may conceive of various modifications and corrections within the scope of the technical idea recited in claims and it is understood that they also naturally belong to the technical scope of this disclosure.

REFERENCE SIGNS LIST

100 Image coding apparatus
105 Quantization unit
108 Inverse quantization unit
117 Rate controller
121 Sub macroblock quantization unit
122 Sub macroblock inverse quantization unit
151 Sub macroblock activity buffer
152 Quantization parameter calculation unit
153 Quantization processor
200 Image decoding apparatus
203 Inverse quantization unit
221 Sub macroblock inverse quantization unit
251 Quantization parameter buffer
252 Orthogonal transform coefficient buffer
253 Inverse quantization processor

The invention claimed is:

1. An image processing apparatus, comprising:
circuitry configured to
set a flag that specifies whether or not a difference quantization parameter is present and a current quantization parameter for a current coding block formed by block partitioning, which recursively splits a largest coding block into smaller coding blocks,
quantize transform coefficient data based on the set current quantization parameter to generate quantized data, and
encode the quantized data to generate a bit stream including the flag.

2. The image processing apparatus according to claim **1**, wherein
the difference quantization parameter is a difference value between the current quantization parameter for the current coding block and a previous quantization parameter for a previous coding block.

3. The image processing apparatus according to claim **2**, wherein
the previous coding block is a coding block that is encoded, by the circuitry, immediately before the current coding block in an encoding process.

4. The image processing apparatus according to claim **1**, wherein
the difference quantization parameter is a difference value between the current quantization parameter set for the current coding block and another quantization parameter set for another coding block.

5. The image processing apparatus according to claim **1**, wherein

the circuitry is further configured to generate the bit stream including the flag as a syntax of the bit stream.

6. A method of an image processing apparatus for processing an image, the method comprising:

setting, by circuitry of the image processing apparatus, a flag that specifies whether or not a difference quantization parameter is present and a current quantization parameter for a current coding block formed by block partitioning, which recursively splits a largest coding block into smaller coding blocks;

quantizing, by the circuitry, transform coefficient data based on the set current quantization parameter to generate quantized data; and

encode the quantized data to generate a bit stream including the flag.

7. The method according to claim **6**, wherein

the difference quantization parameter is a difference value between the current quantization parameter for the current coding block and a previous quantization parameter for a previous coding block.

8. The method according to claim **7**, wherein

the previous coding block is a coding block that is encoded, by the circuitry, immediately before the current coding block in an encoding process.

9. The method according to claim **6**, wherein

the difference quantization parameter is a difference value between the current quantization parameter set for the current coding block and another quantization parameter set for another coding block.

10. The method according to claim **6**, further comprising:

generating the bit stream including the flag as the syntax of the bit stream.

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